A DAY-BY-DAY ACCOUNT OF OPERATION MARKET GARDEN

# ARNHEM

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# ARNHEM 1944

**IT WAS in September 2008 that I made my first visit to the Dutch city of Arnhem. Our hosts for a day's tour of the area had selected the excellent Café Schoonoord in Oosterbeek as an ideal location to halt for lunch. As I perused the images and memorabilia on the restaurant's walls, and absorbed the information provided by our enthusiastic guides, it dawned on me just how little I knew of the detail of Operation *Market Garden.***

It was in the area of the café, I was told, that a dressing station had been established by the Airborne Forces by the evening of 18 September. Two days later the Schoonoord was captured by the Germans, only to change hands again yet again. By this time the medical situation here was desperate.

As I continued to look out of the restaurant's window, the presence of the 21st Independent Parachute Company Memorial was also pointed out in the grounds of a large building on the opposite side of the road. All this was in just one small area of Oosterbeek.

I returned home determined to understand more of the events at Arnhem and the surrounding area, and particularly how they related to each other on a day-to-day basis. It is the result of this research that, to mark the 70th anniversary of Operation *Market Garden*, appears on the following pages.

The story is told through words and images of the men and women (in the case of the Dutch civilians) that fought that desperate duel on a battlefield that stretched from the Belgian-Dutch border, to Nijmegen, and then Oosterbeek and Arnhem. It is certainly stirring stuff. It is a tale of expectation, determination, and stubborn courage in impossible conditions.

If I had only one piece of advice, it would be that once you have read this account make your own journey to Holland to walk in the footsteps of the Allied airborne forces.

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**Distribution:** Seymour Distribution Ltd.,
2 Poultry Avenue, London, EC1A 9PP.
Telephone: 020 7429 400
Printed by Warners (Midlands) Plc,
Bourne, Lincs.
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Published by Key Publishing Ltd
**www.britain-at-war-magazine.com**

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# CONTENTS

**6 OPERATION MARKET GARDEN**
**Short Cut to Victory**
The famous battle to capture the road bridge over the Lower Rhine in September 1944 is considered to have been part of one of the boldest enterprises of the Second World War. It involved the largest ever airborne operation in history.

**20 SUNDAY, 17 SEPTEMBER 1944**
**D-Day: Dropped Behind Enemy Lines**
Conditions were good and optimism high. Before the Germans realised it, the bridges over the Rhine, the Meuse, the Waal and the Maas would be in Allied hands and the door into northern Germany kicked wide open.

**38 MONDAY, 18 SEPTEMBER 1944**
**The Germans Hold Their Ground**
Day One of Operation *Market Garden* had not gone to plan. Instead of the third-rate German troops that the British 1st Airborne Division had expected to encounter at Arnhem, two Panzer divisions blocked their path.

**48 TUESDAY, 19 SEPTEMBER 1944**
**"Where are the Poles?"**
More supplies were expected to be dropped to the increasingly beleaguered men of the 1st Airborne Division, as were reinforcements in the form of the Polish Parachute Brigade. It would, though, be a day of disappointments.

**58 WEDNESDAY, 20 SEPTEMBER 1944**
**"The Terror of the Tigers"**
The tanks were moving in, the lightly-armed forces defending the Oosterbeek perimeter certain to be overwhelmed. Many heroic acts were played out on the fourth day of Operation *Market Garden*.

**72 THURSDAY, 21 SEPTEMBER 1944**
**Last Endeavours at Arnhem**
For two days the 1st Independent Polish Parachute Brigade had waited in anxious frustration for the weather to improve over the United Kingdom. On Thursday, 21 September the skies cleared and the Poles were finally given the news that they were off to join the 1st Airborne Division.

80 **FRIDAY, 22 SEPTEMBER 1944**
**Closing The Corridor**
Urquhart had made it quite clear that he could not hold out for more than twenty-four hours. This, then, would be the day when either XXX Corps would break through to Arnhem, or the British 1st Airborne Division would be wiped out.

86 **SATURDAY, 23 SEPTEMBER 1944**
**Dangerous Waters**
An improvement in the weather brought with it renewed optimism. Fresh troops and supplies would be dropped. The Germans, though, had plans of their own.

94 **SUNDAY, 24 SEPTEMBER 1944**
**Fierce Fighting to the South**
The 1st Airborne Division had held out on the northern bank of the Lower Rhine for a full week. Sooner or later they would either have to be relieved or be ordered to abandon the operation and evacuate the battered and heavily fought over perimeter at Oosterbeek.

100 **MONDAY, 25 SEPTEMBER 1944**
**Evacuation**
The men had done all that had been asked of them and more, yet it was evident that XXX Corps was not going to cross the Rhine.

106 **TUESDAY, 26 SEPTEMBER 1944**
**The Epic of Arnhem**
Operation *Market Garden* was over. Though the majority of the 1st Airborne Division had been left behind.

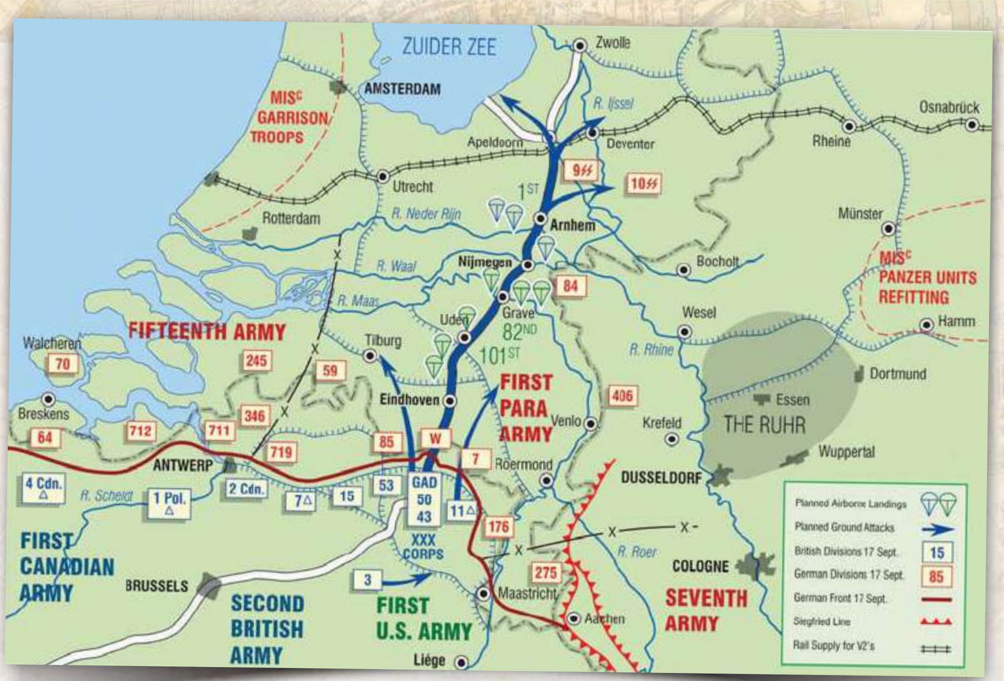
114 **OPERATION PEGASUS**
**Escape Across the Rhine**
Under the very noses of the enemy one of the greatest mass-escape operations of the Second World War began to unfold thanks to the efforts of the local Dutch Resistance.

122 **GLORIOUS DEFEAT OR BRILLIANT SUCCESS?**
Described as a "magnificent disaster" by Major G.G. Norton and as a "glorious defeat" by Peter Harclerode, Operation *Market Garden* was also regarded by others as "a brilliant success".

# OPERATION MARKET GARDEN

## SHORT CUT TO VICTORY

**The famous battle to capture the road bridge over the Lower Rhine in September 1944 is considered to have been part of one of the boldest enterprises of the Second World War. It involved the largest ever airborne operation in history and its objective was to pave the way for a rapid advance into the very heart of Germany to bring the war to a decisive and swift conclusion.**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Zwolle
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MISC GARRISON TROOPS
R. IJssel
Deventer
Osnabrück
Rheine
Apeldoorn
9SS
10SS
Utrecht
1ST
R. Neder Rijn
Arnhem
Rotterdam
Münster
R. Waal
Nijmegen
Bocholt
MISC PANZER UNITS REFITTING
84
R. Maas
Uden
Grave
82ND
Wesel
Hamm
Walcheren
70
FIFTEENTH ARMY
Tilburg
101ST
R. Rhine
245
59
Dortmund
FIRST PARA ARMY
Breskens
Eindhoven
406
Essen
346
Venlo
Krefeld
THE RUHR
64
712
711
85
W
719
ANTWERP
7
Roermond
Wuppertal
4 Cdn.
R. Scheldt
1 Pol.
2 Cdn.
7
15
53
GAD
50
43
11
DUSSELDORF
FIRST CANADIAN ARMY
176
XXX CORPS
R. Roer
COLOGNE
BRUSSELS
3
275
Maastricht
SECOND BRITISH ARMY
FIRST U.S. ARMY
Aachen
SEVENTH ARMY
Liège
Planned Airborne Landings
Planned Ground Attacks
British Divisions 17 Sept. 15
German Divisions 17 Sept. 85
German Front 17 Sept.
Siegfried Line
Rail Supply for V2's

ABOVE: **The plan for Operation *Market Garden.***

FAR LEFT: **The chief proponent of Operation *Market Garden* – Field Marshal Sir Bernard Law Montgomery**. (US NATIONAL ARCHIVES)

**FOR WEEKS after D-Day the Allied armies had fought their way from the Normandy beaches against determined resistance from the German forces. In mid-August the breakthrough came at last and the Germans retreated, no longer able to hold back the British, Canadian and US armies.**

The Allies continued to push rapidly forwards, crossing into Belgium and liberating Brussels on 4 September 1944. "This mad chase is getting crazier hour by hour," wrote the *Daily Mail* correspondent Alexander Clifford who was with the British forces pursuing the Germans through Belgium. "It is so big and so swift that you almost feel it is out of control ... Our columns just press on and on ... The atmosphere is heady and intoxicating."

Since Operation *Overlord* had begun on 6 June, the Germans had lost around 200,000 men and more than 600 tanks. With the Soviets also having driven the Germans out of Russia, it appeared that the Thousand Year Reich had reached a premature end. "The enemy in the West has had it," believed one US staff officer. "Two and a half months of bitter fighting have brought the end of the war in Europe within sight, almost within reach."[1]

All, though, was not quite as satisfactory as it seemed. The advance was so rapid and so unexpected that the Allied supply line had become over-extended. The Mulberry Harbours had performed better than expected but, apart from Cherbourg, the enemy garrisons in the Channel ports were still holding out.

This meant that the so-called "Red Ball Express", an enormous and continuous truck convoy system that supplied Allied forces moving quickly through Europe after breaking out from the D-Day beachheads, now involved a round trip up to 1,600 miles. The men and vehicles could no longer keep up with the demands of the armies. It was not possible to use trains to help with the movement of supplies due to the pre-invasion bombing of the rail network and the widespread ▷▷

**USAAF Douglas C-47 transport aircraft and a row of Waco CG-4 gliders stand ready for Operation *Market Garden* at an airfield in the UK, September 1944.** (US NATIONAL ARCHIVES) sabotage undertaken by the French Resistance. Increasingly, vehicles were breaking down under the strain and the Allied troops involved were nearing exhaustion. The advance was on the verge of stalling just when victory seemed to be within touching distance.

### "MAD TUESDAY"

The German withdrawal from France and Belgium had reached its climax on Tuesday, 5 September 1944. So hasty and so seemingly disorganised had been the retreat, with every form of transport being pressed into service, that this day became known as "Mad Tuesday".

Hitler, however, was preparing to re-organise his forces and stem the advancing Allied tide. The German leader had called *Generalfeldmarschall* von Rundstedt out of enforced retirement. Von Rundstedt had argued for a planned withdrawal from France shortly after the Allies had landed in Normandy. Hitler demanded that his troops stand and fight. The disagreement led to von Rundstedt's dismissal. His place as Commander-in-Chief West had been handed to *Generalfeldmarschall* Gunther von Kluge and then to *Generalfeldmarschall* Walter Model.

RIGHT: **Major General Stanisław Sosabowski (on the left) with Lieutenant General Frederick "Boy" Browning, commander of the First British Airborne Corps. It is said that Sosobowski was aghast when he discovered that the drop zones were seven miles from the bridge at Arnhem, and that the landings would take place over a period of three days. He was adamant that "an airborne operation is not a purchase by instalments".**

Neither von Kluge nor Model had been able to hold back the Allies and, as Von Rundstedt had foreseen, the German divisions in the west had been destroyed. Now Hitler needed his finest general, and he recalled Von Rundstedt. Model had been in charge for just eighteen days.

Hitler had expected the so-called *Atlantikwall* to hold back the western Allies. Now he told von Rundstedt that the defence of the Fatherland would depend on holding the *Westwall* (known to the Allies as the Siegfried Line), a formidable barrier which stretched for more than 390 miles. It ran opposite the Maginot Line from the border with Holland down to Switzerland. It would be there that the Allied thrust would be parried.

If von Rundstedt was to hold the Allies on the *Westwall* he would need every available soldier. However, the speed of the Allied advance had split the German Army Group B, in the north, into two with the Fifteenth Army stranded in the north-west of Belgium and Holland. Yet, this force, 80,000 strong, held the southern bank of the River Scheldt. The significance of this will be seen shortly.

### MONTGOMERY'S VISION

By this time, the western Allies had three Army Groups in France. To the north was Field Marshal Sir Bernard Law Montgomery's 21st Army Group, which consisted of the Canadian First Army and the British Second Army. In the centre was the American 12th Army Group under General Omar Bradley and, to the south, was General Jacob Devers' US 6th Army Group.

ABOVE: **Field Marshal Montgomery studies a map with Lieutenant-General Horrocks, GOC XXX Corps (on the left), and Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands, GOC all Dutch forces under Montgomery's command, 8 September 1944. Note XXX Corp's formation badge on Horrocks right arm.** (IWM; BU766)

ABOVE: **Lieutenant-General Lewis Brereton was appointed as the first commanding officer of the First Allied Airborne Army. He had previously led the USAAF's Ninth Air Force.** (NARA)

LEFT: **Allied supplies pour ashore in Normandy following the D-Day landings. Within weeks of this image being taken, Operation *Market Garden* would be underway.** (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

What now had to be decided was the next stage of the offensive and here there was a strong divergence of opinion. The aim of the Supreme Allied Commander, General Dwight Eisenhower, was the establishment of bridges over the Rhine throughout its entire length, but not to go beyond the Rhine until the Scheldt estuary had been cleared of the enemy. This was opposed by Montgomery. "My intention," he wrote, "was to establish bridgeheads over the Meuse and Rhine in readiness for the time when it would be possible to advance eastwards to occupy the Ruhr." Montgomery wanted immediate action to secure the crossings of these vital rivers; he did not want to wait until the Scheldt had been cleared.

The Scheldt estuary, the passage of which is dominated by the island of Walcheren, was still controlled by the German Fifteenth Army. The importance of this was that at the head of the Scheldt is the port of Antwerp, the second largest in Europe. If shipping could reach Antwerp the Allied line of communication would be enormously reduced. To some, it made sense to wait until the Scheldt was under Allied control.

On the other hand, as Montgomery had noticed, the enemy was beginning to "recover his balance", so the need to force the Rhine was considered urgent. "The purpose was to cross the Meuse and the Rhine, and to place Second Army in a suitable position for the subsequent development of operations towards the northern face of the Ruhr and the North German plains," he argued.[2] If the Allies waited until their ships could unload at Antwerp the Germans would be granted more time to recover and re-equip.

It is easy to argue in favour of both policies. It is true that any advance into Germany with supply lines stretching all the way back to Normandy would present innumerable problems. Not only would any such offensive exacerbate the existing supply shortages but an extended line of communication in enemy territory would be vulnerable to sabotage and attack from enemy forces. The Allies could well find themselves cut off in the heart of Germany.

So the decision facing Eisenhower was a difficult one. If he waited until the Scheldt was under Allied control the invasion of Germany might prove a very costly affair but if he attacked immediately an even greater disaster might befall the Allied forces.

There was another difference in policy between Montgomery and Eisenhower. The Supreme Allied Commander insisted on driving into Germany on a "broad" front. This was in fact the previously agreed strategy and was a two-pronged approach with the Americans advancing into Germany to the south and the British and Canadians to the north. But now Montgomery saw an opportunity to strike a devastating blow against the Germans whilst they were still disorganised and demoralised, by focusing the Allied effort into a single, unstoppable thrust deep into the heart of Germany.

The broad front principle meant that the enemy would be widely engaged and multiple lines of communication would make it easier to keep the troops supplied. Montgomery, however, believed

▷▷

that such an approach would mean that all the troops would be engaged with no reserves available to relieve the exhausted troops. A single thrust, on the other hand would mean that all the weight of the Allied armies could be delivered against a single point with ample reserves following behind, ready to move to the front when required. Montgomery's plan has been described as "breathtaking" in its scope with the possibility that his rapid thrust into Germany could well bring about the complete collapse of the enemy.

## THE POLITICS OF WAR

There were also political factors at play. An election was looming in the UK and with it an end to the coalition and a return to party politics. Churchill could not rely upon what had been achieved in the past – he had to be seen as someone who could still get things done. With these thoughts in mind, no doubt, Churchill had appointed his son-in-law, Duncan Sandys, to coordinate action against the latest threat to Britain – Hitler's "Vengeance" weapons.

The V-1s had been striking fear into the residents of London and the south-east, but in their rapid advance the Allies had overrun the static launching sites in northern France. On 7 September Sandys declared, amidst much publicity, that London was finally safe. The very next night an explosion rocked Chiswick and Epping. Sandys immediately imposed a Secrecy Order. What had struck London was an even more terrifying weapon, the V-2 rocket.

RIGHT: **Part of a Red Ball Express convoy in France following the system's introduction on 25 August 1944. The route, marked with red balls, was closed to civilian traffic; those vehicles involved were painted with the same red balls and were also given priority on regular roads.** (US NATIONAL ARCHIVES)

RIGHT (OPPOSITE PAGE): **Trucks operating as part of the Red Ball Express battle the mud after heavy rainfall in 1944. At its peak, the Red Ball Express operated 5,958 vehicles and carried about 12,500 tons of supplies per day.** (US NATIONAL ARCHIVES)

The first V-2s were fired from mobile launchers in the area around The Hague and Wassenaar, some sixty miles west of Arnhem, with the SS general overseeing the V-2 attacks being based outside Nijmegen. Being mobile, they could be launched from almost anywhere within the limit of their range. They could also be concealed, so trying to destroy the launchers by air attack was unlikely to be effective. The only way to stop the V-2s was by occupying northern Holland. Churchill could hardly go to the polls with V-2s dropping upon the seat of government, and in a secret Whitehall note Montgomery was asked to give an approximate date when northern Holland could be "roped off".[3]

There was also much political credit to be gained by being the first into Berlin. Ever since the Americans had entered the war, Britain had been demoted to the second rank of the Allied powers behind the US and the Soviet Union. In the hard bargaining which would inevitably take place after the war, Churchill wanted to be in the strongest possible position. If the Western Allies, and Britain in particular, could take both the Ruhr and the German capital, their hand would be strengthened considerably in the post-war bargaining.

Another consideration was that the Allied Airborne Army, a newly-created body that was expensive both to train and maintain, was sitting idle. There was pressure from both sides of the Atlantic to see it used productively.

## OPERATION COMET

It was hard for Eisenhower to dismiss entirely the initial plan put forward to him by Montgomery, codenamed Operation *Comet*, in which the bridges over the River Maas, the Rhine and the Lower Rhine, would be captured by a combination of airborne and land forces. This would pave the way for any future advance into Germany.

The capture of the bridges at Grave, Nijmegen and Arnhem, would be undertaken by one British airborne division and the 1st Polish Airborne Brigade. The Guards Armoured Brigade of XXX Corps would then pass over the captured bridges and with the 52nd (Lowland) Division, which would be

**British or Canadian tanks on the move during the breakout from Normandy.** (CONSEIL RÉGIONAL DE BASSE-NORMANDIE/CANADIAN NATIONAL ARCHIVES)

flown in by glider, establish a secure bridgehead. The start date for *Comet* was 8 September 1944.

To help prepare the way for *Comet* the RAF's Bomber Command was tasked with heavy raids on 3 September with 675 aircraft attacking six airfields in Holland. Doubts about the viability of *Comet*, however, were being raised. There were still problems with adequate supplies reaching the front and the commander of the 1st Polish Airborne Brigade, Major General Stanisław Sosabowski, was worried that the forces to be employed were inadequate for the task, especially as it seemed that the Germans were beginning to reorganise after their headlong retreat. He was supported in this by Major General Robert Elliott "Roy" Urquhart who commanded the British 1st Airborne Division. During the briefing on *Comet* given by Urquhart, Sosabowski interrupted a number of times, culminating in his famous remark, "But the Germans, general, the Germans". It was enough to convince Urquhart.

Together they appealed to Lieutenant General Frederick "Boy" Browning, Commander of the First British Airborne Corps. Their views were upheld by Lieutenant General Miles Dempsey, whose 2nd Army would provide the ground forces for the operation. Montgomery was asked to abandon *Comet*. At first the start of the operation was postponed and then finally cancelled.

"Thank goodness 'Comet' was cancelled," wrote Brigadier "Shan" Hackett, whose 4th Parachute Brigade was to have captured the bridge at Grave. "It would have been a disaster."[4]

### "MONTY, YOU CAN'T DO IT."

When Montgomery next met Eisenhower he continued to put forward his views on the single thrust in the strongest of terms, explaining the full extent of his ambitious plans.

"What you're proposing is this – if I give you all of the supplies you want, you could go straight to Berlin – right straight to Berlin?" said Eisenhower. "Monty, you're nuts. You can't do it. What the hell! If you try a long column like that in a single thrust you'd have to throw off division after division to protect your flanks from attack. Now suppose you did get a bridge across the Rhine, you couldn't depend for long on that one bridge to supply your drive. Monty, you can't do it."

Montgomery was undeterred. "I'll supply them all right. Just give me what I need and I'll reach Berlin and end the war."[5] ▷▷

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## THE FIRST ALLIED AIRBORNE ARMY

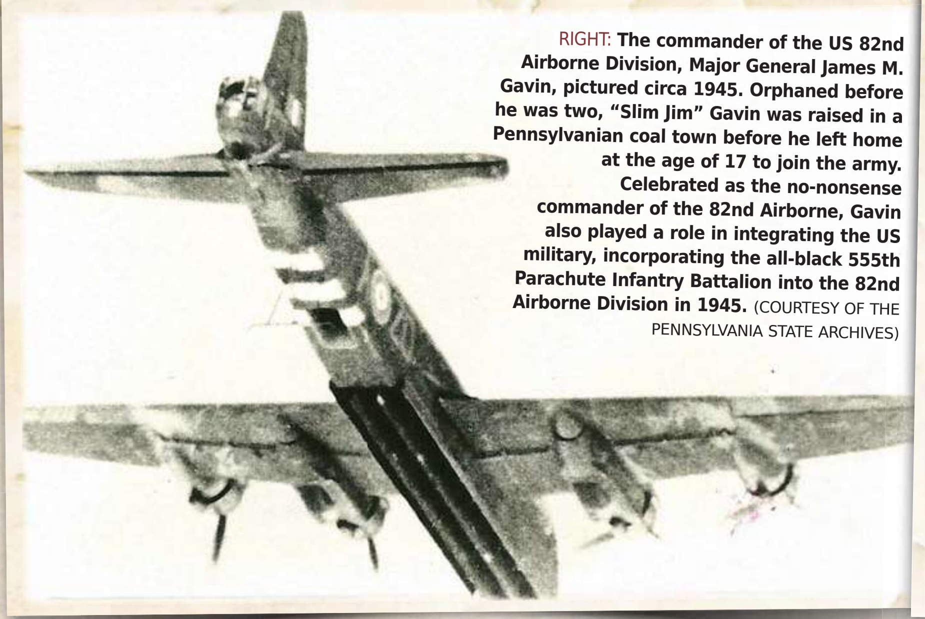
THE FIRST Allied Airborne Army was formed in the summer of 1944, with US General Lewis H. Brereton being officially placed in command on 2 August. The British Lieutenant General F.A.M. Browning was appointed Deputy Commander to Brereton two days later. Command of the new army was exercised through Headquarters, 1st Airborne Corps under Browning, for the British airborne forces and 18th Airborne Corps, under US General Matthew Ridgway, for US forces.

The purpose of the new organisation was to co-ordinate the activities of the various British and American units in the UK and of the air transport units required to take them into action, though tactical control was still to be exercised at divisional level. The first operation in which the new formation was to be involved was Operation *Transfigure*. This was a plan to drop the airborne troops behind the Germans in a bid to prevent them escaping through the Falaise Gap.

On 13 August, the airborne forces under the command of First Allied Airborne Army, consisting of the 1st Airborne Division, the 101st Airborne Division, the Polish Independent Division and the 52nd (Lowland) Division (which had been trained as an air-portable division) were moved to airfields in northern France, ready for the operation. The plan was that the airborne troops would capture an airstrip near Rambouillet, where the 52nd Division would be landed to join them. The operation was cancelled before it could begin as the land forces reached the drop zone sooner than expected.

After this disappointment, a second operation was planned. This was Operation *Linnet* which was to have used the *Transfigure* forces, with the addition of the US 82nd Airborne Division, but this operation was also abandoned. Next was a plan to capture of the German-held port of Boulogne, called Operation Boxer, using the same forces as planned for *Transfigure*. Yet again this was cancelled because of the unexpected speed of the Allied land forces. This operation was followed by a scheme to create a bridgehead over the River Escaut to, once again, try and cut off the retreating enemy, using the same troops as *Transfigure*. Once more events moved so quickly that the operation had to be cancelled.

Having put together this elite formation, it seemed to have no purpose. The troops were left kicking their heels in Britain whilst the war moved ever further away. When *Market Garden* was proposed it seemed at last there was a job for the First Allied Airborne Army.



RIGHT: **The commander of the US 82nd Airborne Division, Major General James M. Gavin, pictured circa 1945. Orphaned before he was two, "Slim Jim" Gavin was raised in a Pennsylvanian coal town before he left home at the age of 17 to join the army. Celebrated as the no-nonsense commander of the 82nd Airborne, Gavin also played a role in integrating the US military, incorporating the all-black 555th Parachute Infantry Battalion into the 82nd Airborne Division in 1945.** (COURTESY OF THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE ARCHIVES)

ABOVE: **An unusual view of a Short Stirling IV, in this case LK242 "ZO-A" of 196 Squadron, showing the paratrooper exit hatch in the floor of the rear of the fuselage, as well as the lengthy bomb bay which could accommodate eighteen supply canisters.** (J. HIBBS)

The scheme was far too ambitious for Eisenhower and he insisted that they wait until the Scheldt was cleared of enemy troops and Antwerp opened up. But Montgomery was not finished. He explained that he would use an overwhelming force to capture the bridges over the Waal, the Rhine and the Lower Rhine, and much of that force was sitting idly in the UK – the Airborne Army.

"The essential feature of the plan," Montgomery wrote in his later report on operations, "was the laying of a carpet of airborne troops across the waterways from the Meuse-Escaut Canal to the Neder Rijn [Lower Rhine], on the general axis of the road through Eindhoven to Uden, Grave, Nijmegen and Arnhem. The airborne carpet and bridgehead forces were provided by 82 and 101 United States Airborne Divisions and 1 British Airborne Division, and a Polish parachute brigade. Along the corridor, or airborne carpet, 30 British Corps was to advance and establish itself North of the Neder Rijn with bridgeheads over the Ijssel facing East."

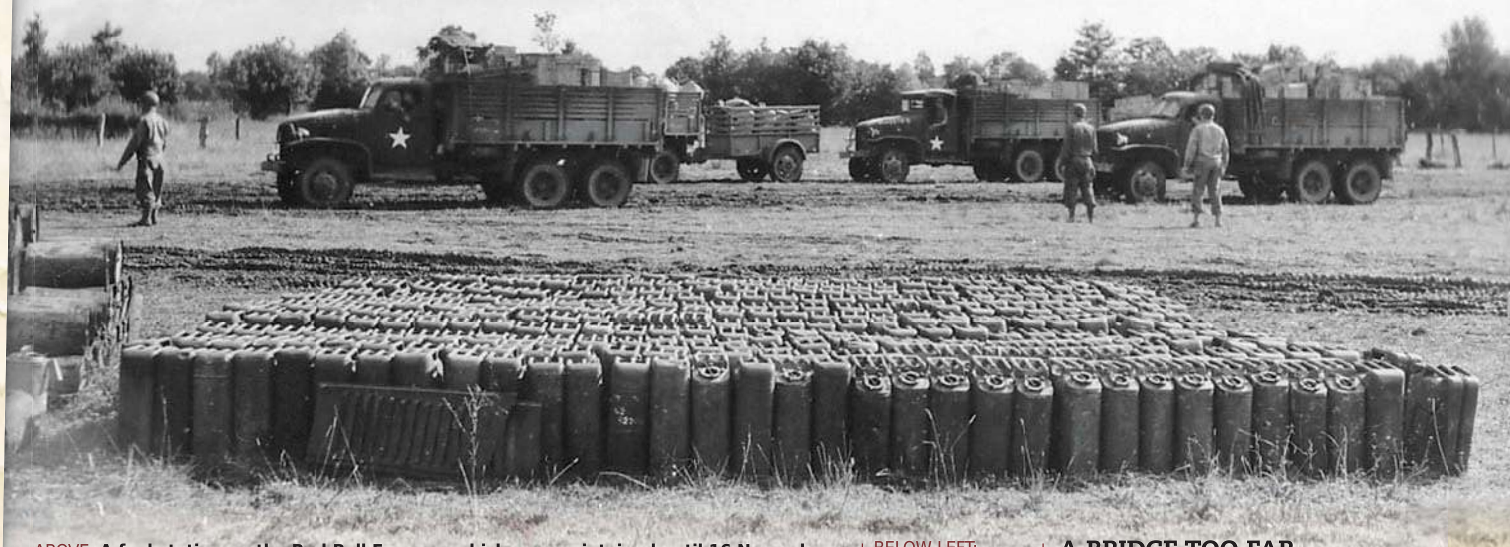
This was a staggering idea. Three full divisions plus an independent brigade with all its weapons and equipment were to be dropped behind enemy lines. Nothing like this had ever been attempted before.

Surprisingly, Eisenhower was bowled over by the plan. The prospect of the Allied armies crashing into Germany and tearing into Berlin ahead of the Soviets was simply too tempting to resist. "I not only approved," Eisenhower is reported to have later said, "I insisted upon it. What we needed was a bridgehead over the Rhine. If that could be accomplished, I was quite willing to wait on all other operations."[6]

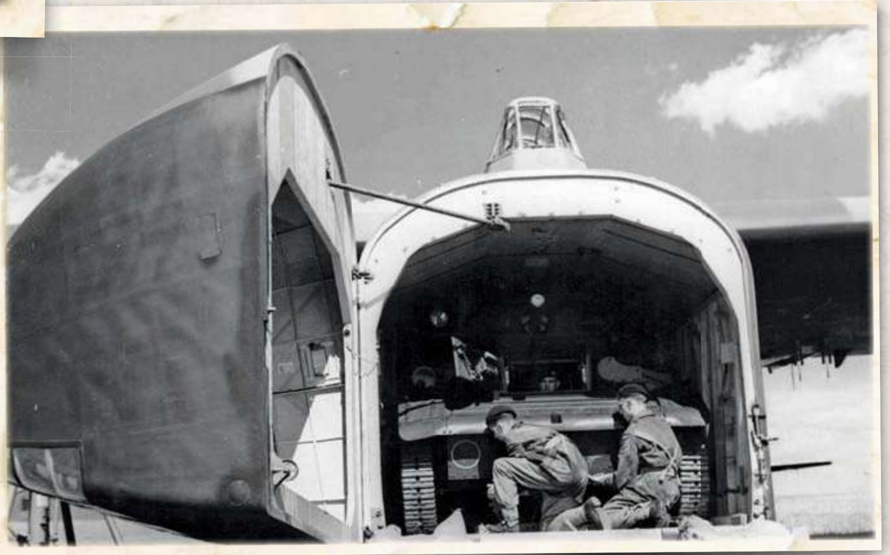
Montgomery, though, did not get all he wanted. Eisenhower was only prepared to sanction a bridgehead over the Rhine and not the drive into Germany. The Allied Commander was still going to play safe. Montgomery argued for every part of his great scheme to be implemented, but Eisenhower said to him "let's get over the Rhine first before we discuss anything else." In reality all that Eisenhower had agreed to was merely an enlarged version of *Comet*.

"I'll supply them all right. Just give me what I need and I'll reach Berlin and end the war."

ABOVE: **A General Aircraft Limited GAL.49 Hamilcar pictured in flight being towed by a Handley Page Halifax. The Hamilcar was the largest Allied wooden glider of the war with a wingspan of 110 feet and a load capacity of seven tons which meant that it could carry medium artillery pieces (such as a 17-pounder anti-tank gun and tractor or a 25-pounder and tractor), or a light tank, or jeeps, or two universal carriers, amongst a large range of associated equipment.** (HMP)



ABOVE: **A fuel station on the Red Ball Express, which was maintained until 16 November 1944, by when the port at Antwerp was finally brought on line.** (US NATIONAL ARCHIVES)



BELOW LEFT: **A Hamilcar glider with its nose door open. Though it was capable of lifting a light tank – such as the Tetrarch seen in this image – the twenty-eight Hamilcars used during *Market Garden* were actually used to transport the Universal Carriers (two per glider) of the 1st Airborne's infantry battalions or the 17-pounders of the airborne anti-tank batteries.** (COURTESY OF THE TANK MUSEUM)

## MARKET GARDEN

The plan that Montgomery was allowed to undertake was in two distinct parts. The first was code-named Operation *Market*. This part of the plan would begin with Major General Maxwell D. Taylor's 101st Airborne Division dropping at two locations in the rear of the German lines to take the bridges north-west of Eindhoven – those at Son and Veghel. Then, Major General James M. Gavin's 82nd Airborne Division would be dropped to take the bridges to the east of those towns. Meanwhile the British 1st Airborne Division and the 1st Polish Independent Parachute Brigade would be dropped behind the Lower Rhine to take the road bridge at Arnhem and the rail bridge at Oosterbeek. In total there were six major crossings to be seized, the bridges of which were all still intact.

Immediately after the airborne troops had landed Lieutenant General Sir Brian Horrocks' XXX Corps would lead the British 2nd Army across the bridges, securing them for the breakthrough into Germany. This part of the plan was code-named Operation *Garden*. The Guards Armoured Division would be what Montgomery called the "spearhead" of this advance. If any of the bridges were destroyed it was arranged that the armour would fan out along the river bank and, in conjunction with the airborne troops, facilitate bridging operations.

For the plan to work, the British airborne forces at the extreme northern end of the route would need to hold their positions long enough for XXX Corps to make the sixty-four-mile dash along the single road that led from Nijmegen to Arnhem. It was also necessary to capture as many of the bridges as possible undamaged and for the American airborne divisions to hold the corridor open against enemy counter-attack. To help in securing the corridor through Eindhoven, Veghel and Grave, the British 8th Armoured Division was to assist the 101st Airborne.

BELOW: **Troops of the US 101st Airborne Division pictured loading a Jeep into a Waco CG-4 glider prior to taking off on 17 September 1944. Like the other airborne divisions, the 101st moved to its marshalling areas on Thursday, 14 September 1944.** (US NATIONAL ARCHIVES)

## A BRIDGE TOO FAR

In his memoirs, Horrocks claims that he had three main concerns about his part in the operation. Firstly, he was expected to break through the German forces in front of XXX Corps. This was not going to be as easy as everyone was assuming. The German front had been stabilising for some days and reinforcements, mainly *Fallschirmjäger* (paratroopers), had been arriving from Germany. The country was wooded and marshy which limited his opportunities for outflanking the enemy positions. "The only thing I could do was to blast my way down the main road," he wrote.

Secondly, even after he had forced his way through the first German lines, the success of the plan hinged on the airborne troops capturing all the bridges intact on the road to Arnhem. There were three wide canals, three major rivers and two smaller tributaries to be crossed.

It was known that they were all prepared for demolition. Could they all be taken before they were blown up, Horrocks wondered? If not, a large number of engineers, sappers and bridging equipment would have to be moved forward, all of which would mean considerable delays. To prepare for such a contingency, Horrocks assembled no fewer

▷▷

than 9,000 sappers and 2,300 vehicles at Leopoldsburg, in the Belgian province of Limburg, to be rushed to the front if necessary. Aerial photographs had been taken of each of the bridges and carefully studied so that the exact materials and men could be hurried forward if any of the bridges had to be hurriedly repaired.

Horrock's third concern was the fact that there was only one road that XXX Corps could take to reach Arnhem, and in the corps were 20,000 vehicles. As "the essence of the plan was speed to get to the airborne troops as soon as possible," he noted, "this meant the most careful traffic control". The way this was to be achieved was by treating the road as if it were a railway, with a strict timetable. No unit of more than five vehicles was to be permitted to travel on the road without receiving a travel time from a "movement" office at XXX Corps' HQ.

Traffic control posts with breakdown teams and first-aid detachments were formed behind the leading troops. The whole enterprise linked by wireless.[7]

When Montgomery outlined the proposed scheme on a map to Lieutenant General Browning he asked the Field Marshal how long it would take Horrock's corps to reach the road bridge at Arnhem. "Two days," Montgomery replied without hesitation. Browning studied the map carefully. "We can hold it for four," Browning replied and then uttered what has probably become the most famous phrase of the Second World War. "But, sir, I think we might be going a bridge too far."[8]

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TOP: **A Waco CG-4 glider (serial number 42-79211) pictured airborne and under tow. During Operation *Market Garden* the US airborne units would fly a total of 1,821 Wacos to Holland.** (NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE US AIR FORCE)

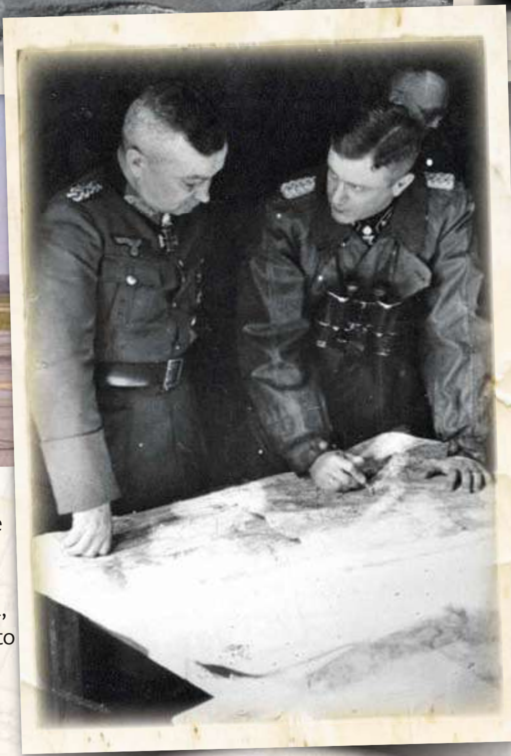
ABOVE: **A surviving example of a Waco CG-4 glider, which was named Hadrian in British military service. Constructed of fabric-covered wood and metal, the Waco was crewed by a pilot and co-pilot, alongside whom it could transport a further thirteen men and their equipment.** (NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE US AIR FORCE)

## THE AIR EFFORT

The scale of the proposed operation was remarkable. Operation *Market* required thirty-six battalions to be landed behind enemy lines, a total of more than 34,000 men. To transport them all, the 1,250 C-47 Dakotas of the US IX Troop Carrier Command and the RAF's 38 Group had to be made available to the First Airborne Army, along with the transport aircraft of 46 Group. In addition to this, each division, it was estimated, would require 264 tons of supplies to be dropped to it each day.

In Operation *Comet* a single division would have landed with "thunderclap surprise", as General Lewis Brereton, Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Airborne Army, put it. Operation *Market*, on the other hand, was such a large enterprise that all the forces could not be dropped in one go, and would have to be spread over three days. What Montgomery called an airborne carpet was, as one historian has put it, in reality more like a number of separate rugs. As will be seen, the gaps between them would be avenues into which the Germans were able to deploy their hurriedly assembled forces.

All the flights were to be undertaken in daylight. The reasons for this were that many of the transport aircraft crews had not been trained in night formation flying, and accurately locating the landing and drop zones would be easier in daylight.



## ARNHEM

Urquhart's arrangements for the capture of those farthest bridges, the road and rail bridges over the Lower Rhine at Arnhem and Oosterbeek, was to begin with the pathfinders of the 21st Independent Parachute Company landing to mark out the three drop zones and landing zones for the first main airlift, which would be thirty minutes later. Once this had been done, the major part of the 1st Airlanding Brigade under Brigadier Philip "Pip" Hicks would arrive.

It was their job to secure and hold the landing zones for the 1st Parachute Brigade which would follow shortly afterwards. The Airlanding Brigade would continue to hold the drop and landing zones until the following day when the whole of the 4th Parachute Brigade would arrive. It would then

LEFT: **The view that many crews from the Glider Pilot Regiment would have seen during their flight to Arnhem - a photograph taken through the cockpit screen of a Horsa.** (THE ASSAULT GLIDER TRUST)

MIDDLE LEFT: ***Generalfeldmarschall* Walter Model discusses the tactical situation with SS-*Brigadeführer* Heinz Harmel during the fighting in and around Arnhem. Harmel was the commander of 10.SS-Panzer-Division *Frundsberg* which had been sent to Arnhem to rest prior to *Market Garden*.** (BUNDESARCHIV, BILD 183-J27784/ ADENDORF, PETER/ CC-BY-SA)

move to defend the Polish drop zone south of the Lower Rhine.

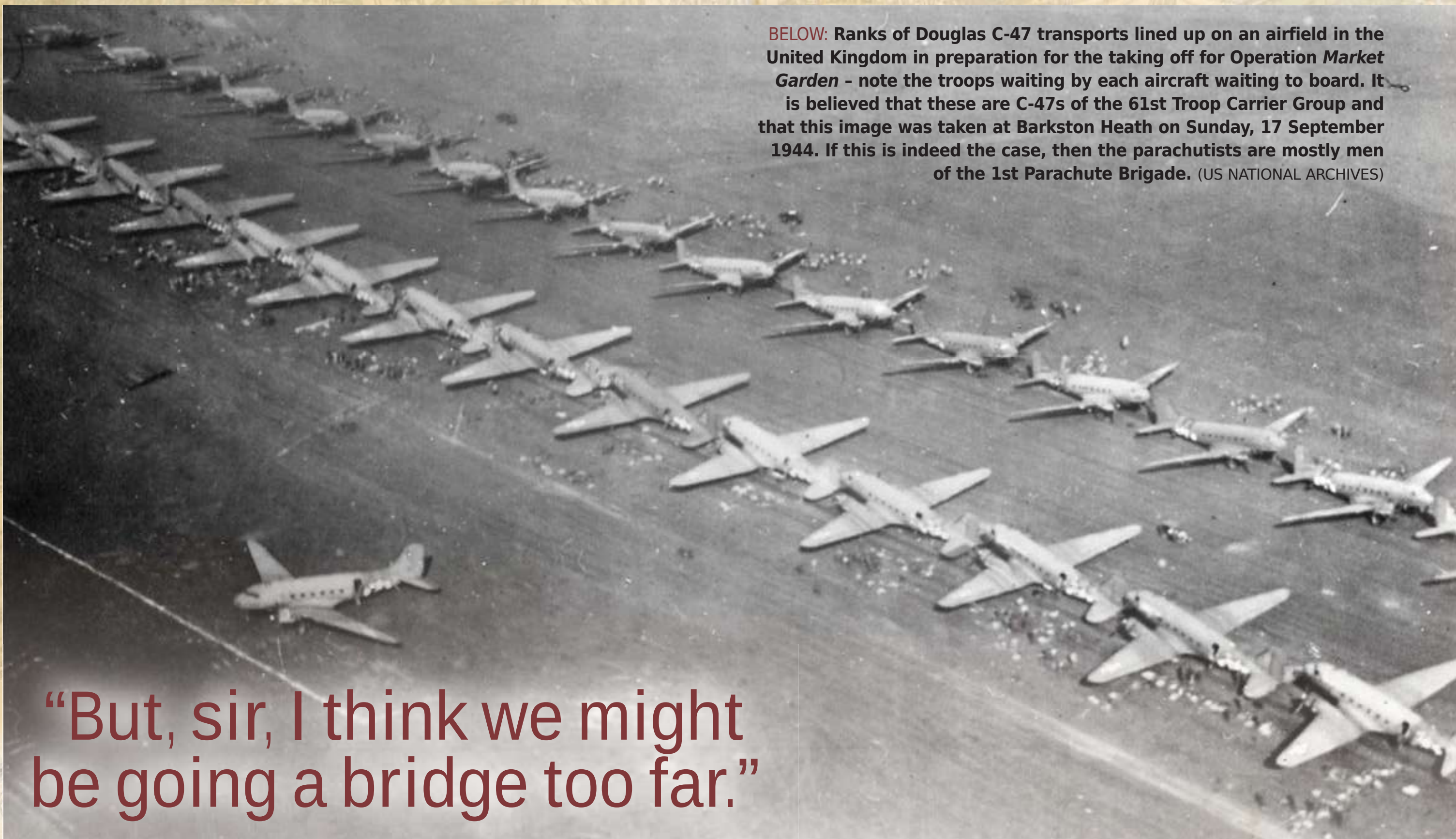
The 1st Parachute Brigade consisted of three battalions plus Major Freddie Gough's 1st Airborne Reconnaissance Squadron. It would be Gough's job to make a dash for the road bridge at Arnhem and hold it until the rest of the 1st Parachute Brigade arrived.

Brigadier Gerald Lathbury, CO of the 1st Parachute Brigade, decided to send his three parachute battalions along three separate routes from the drop zone to Arnhem on the basis that by taking three different routes they would not get in each others' way. The drawback to this was that it meant his brigade was widely spread. This in turn meant that command and control would be difficult for Lathbury and if the paratroopers met stiff resistance it would be hard for him to concentrate his brigade quickly.

The 2nd Parachute Battalion was to take the most southerly route, along a minor road that ran close by the Lower Rhine. This battalion was expected to reach the bridges ahead of the rest of the brigade and so accompanying it was Lathbury's headquarters and the supporting Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC) and Royal Army Service Corps (RASC) units and the brigade's reserve ammunition. The 3rd Parachute Battalion would take the middle route through the town of Oosterbeek, whilst the 1st Parachute Battalion was to move to secure an area of Arnhem north of the road bridge to guard against any intervention from German forces coming from that direction.

On Day 2, Brigadier Hackett's 4th Parachute Brigade would land to strengthen the defensive positions to the north. On the third day of the operation, the 1st Polish Independent Parachute Brigade was to complete the encirclement of Arnhem by landing on the polder (a low-lying tract of land enclosed by embankments) to the south of the bridge. ▷▷

**A large number of US Waco gliders ready for use in *Market Garden*. During the D-Day operations, American airborne forces had used both the Waco and the British-built AS.51 Airspeed Horsa; for the landings in Holland they used only the former.** (US NATIONAL ARCHIVES)



BELOW: **Ranks of Douglas C-47 transports lined up on an airfield in the United Kingdom in preparation for the taking off for Operation *Market Garden* – note the troops waiting by each aircraft waiting to board. It is believed that these are C-47s of the 61st Troop Carrier Group and that this image was taken at Barkston Heath on Sunday, 17 September 1944. If this is indeed the case, then the parachutists are mostly men of the 1st Parachute Brigade.** (US NATIONAL ARCHIVES)

> "But, sir, I think we might be going a bridge too far."

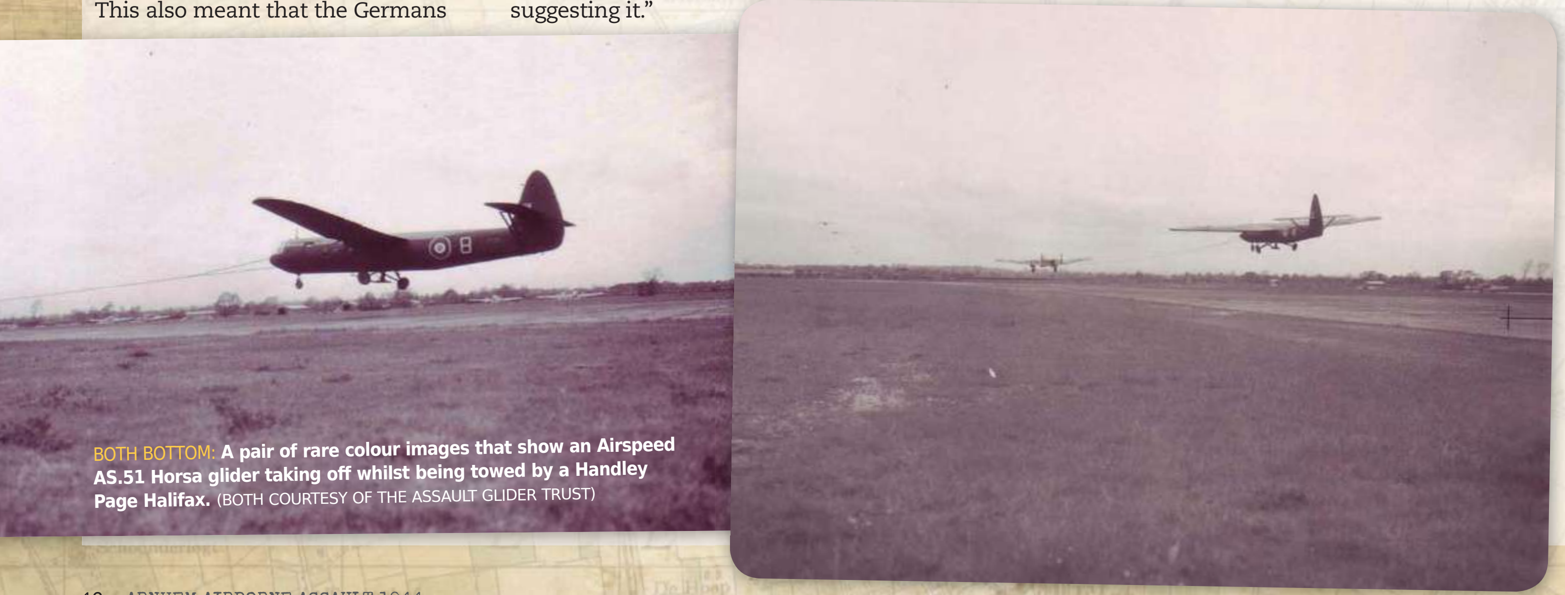
This seemed a comprehensive plan, but it contained one inherent flaw. In *Comet* it was envisaged that a *coup-de-main* force would land by glider near to the Arnhem road bridge. In the much larger *Market* this was cancelled. The drop zones and landing zones were some eight or so miles from the bridges. By the time that the paratroopers had landed, sorted themselves out and marched to Arnhem with all their kit and equipment, at least three hours would have passed – three hours during which the Germans would be able to concentrate all their efforts on stopping the 1st Airborne Reconnaissance Squadron which numbered less than 200 men. This also meant that the Germans defending the two bridges would have plenty of time to blow them up if they felt that they could not successfully defend them.

The issue with a *coup-de-main* was that it was likely to result in heavy casualties amongst the air crews, as they were certain to face heavy anti-aircraft fire, and for the infantry as the men would be landing right on top of the enemy. Nevertheless, Colonel George Chatterton, the commander of the Glider Pilot Regiment, believed it would be worth the risk: "I saw no reason why we could not do it but apparently nobody else saw the need for it and I distinctly remember being called a bloody murderer and assassin for suggesting it."

BELOW RIGHT (OPPOSITE PAGE): **The day before *Market Garden* begins, infantry of the 50th (Northumbrian) Division move up past a knocked-out German 88mm gun near "Joe's Bridge", which, on the Meuse-Escaut Canal in Belgium, was effectively XXX Corps' jumping-off point for the advance to Arnhem.** (IWM; B9982)

## "BUT THE GERMANS, GENERAL, WHAT ABOUT THE GERMANS"

One of *Generalfeldmarschall* Walter Model's last acts as Commander-in-Chief West was to have far-reaching consequences. On 4 September, just two weeks before *Market Garden*, he ordered *Obergruppenführer und General der Waffen*-SS William Bittrich to disengage from the enemy and withdraw the II SS Panzer Corps into Holland to allow his two Panzer divisions to refit and recuperate. Model had acquired a reputation as an extraordinarily capable defensive general and had been nicknamed "the Führer's Fireman". As it happened, Model was staying at the Tafelberg Hotel in Oosterbeek on 17 September



BOTH BOTTOM: **A pair of rare colour images that show an Airspeed AS.51 Horsa glider taking off whilst being towed by a Handley Page Halifax.** (BOTH COURTESY OF THE ASSAULT GLIDER TRUST) and was able to personally direct the forthcoming battle. His famed tactical ability would be tested over the course of the next few days.

The leading units of Bittrich's II SS Panzer Corps began arriving in the Arnhem area two days later. Consisting of the 9th Waffen-SS Division *Hohenstaufen* and the 10th Waffen-SS Division *Frundsberg*, Bittrich's Corps numbered between 6,500 and 7,000 men. However, for the purpose of being refitted it would be split up, with the 9th Division being sent back to Germany. By 17 September 1944, only the technical and administrative units of the 9th *Hohenstaufen* Division had left for Germany. The remainder of II SS Panzer Corps, including all its tanks, were still in the Arnhem area.

Other than these two Panzer divisions, the German troops around Arnhem were involved in training and garrison duties and were not considered front line soldiers. One of these units was SS-*Sturmbannführer* Sepp Krafft's SS Training Battalion which was operating in the woods around Wolfheze, a village roughly seven miles north-west of Arnhem and just to the east of the British dropping and landing zones.

Whilst these forces would have an immediate impact upon the attempt to capture the Lower Rhine bridges, other German units stood in the way of XXX Corps. Amongst these was *Generaloberst* Kurt Student's First Parachute Army (1. *Fallschrim-Armee*). This was an improvised formation hurriedly assembled to stop the Allies from reaching the German border. This force was to stop the Allies penetrating beyond the line of the Meuse-Escaut Canal on the Dutch-Belgium border and would be the first German opposition that XXX Corps would have to deal with. If anyone should have doubted the rapid stiffening of the German resistance, it should have been removed when on the days leading up to the start of *Market Garden*, the Germans had actually launched counter-attacks against XXX Corps' bridgehead on the Canal.

Sosabowski's concerns that the senior commanders were being unduly dismissive about the strength of the German forces around Arnhem also worried Urquhart, especially when reports were received from the Dutch underground stating the arrival of German armoured units at Arnhem. These reports were dismissed by Army Intelligence on the grounds that the Resistance was known to have been penetrated by the Germans and any information it supplied was likely to be unreliable.

Lieutenant General Walter Smith, the Supreme Headquarters Expeditionary Force's Chief-of-Staff, was also anxious at the apparent growing strength of the German forces and he suggested to Montgomery that the number of troops to be dropped at Arnhem should be increased, even perhaps by shifting some of the US airborne troops farther north. "Montgomery ridiculed the idea and laughed me out of his tent," Smith later reported. "He waved my objections airily aside."

Major Brian Urquhart, who was no relation to the Major General,

▷▷

BELOW: **Paratroopers from the Pathfinders of 3 Platoon, 21st Independent Parachute Company prepare to board Short Stirling IVs of 620 Squadron (including QS-V and QS-W) at RAF Fairford, Gloucestershire, on the morning of 17 September 1944.** (R.S.G. MACKAY)

ABOVE: **An Airspeed AS.51 Horsa glider under tow.** (HMP) was Browning's Intelligence Officer. In that role he had received all the reports from the Dutch Resistance as well as a decoded intercept from a secret ULTRA transmission, all of which indicated the presence of German armoured units in the Arnhem area. He had also received information from 21st Army Group in Belgium that the 9th and 10th Panzer divisions had been seen heading in the general direction of Arnhem.

He raised his concerns with Browning on a number of occasions, but without success. So he requested a low-level aerial reconnaissance on 12 September. Three days later the prints arrived. They quite clearly showed a number of armoured vehicles in the area.

Armed with what he considered to be conclusive proof, Brian Urquhart went to see Browning again. He was treated by Browning, in his own words, like "a nervous child suffering from a nightmare".[9]

Undeterred, Urquhart pressed the point, but with just two days to go before the start of *Market Garden* no-one at senior level wanted to call the operation off. So, instead of taking heed of Urquhart's warnings, Browning told his senior medical officer, Colonel Austin Eagger, to send Brian Urquhart on sick leave, on account of him suffering from "nervous strain and exhaustion". The last chance to prevent the disaster which would overwhelm the 1st Airborne Division had gone.

It is a cardinal rule of warfare that one should never underestimate the enemy. Many of the senior staff involved in *Market Garden* did not just underestimate the Germans, they all but disregarded them. The consequences of this will soon be seen.

BELOW AND RIGHT: **The ultimate target of Operation *Market Garden* – the road bridge in Arnhem which has become known as "A Bridge Too Far". Although the bridge survived the battle, it was bombed and destroyed by USAAF B-26 Marauders of the 344th Bomb Group on 7 October 1944. The bridge, seen here, and called the John Frost Bridge (John Frostbrug in Dutch) since December 1977, is an exact copy built after the war using the plans and drawings of its predecessor.** (SHUTTERSTOCK)

## THE GREAT MISTAKE

The capture of Antwerp by the Allies on 4 September had created an unusual stalemate. The German Fifteenth Army was now cut off, with the Allies between *General der Infanterie* Gustav-Adolf von Zangen's men and the rest of the German forces in Holland. By the same token, the continuing presence of the Fifteenth Army in the Scheldt still meant that the port of Antwerp could not be used by the Allies. As we know, Eisenhower wanted to deal with Fifteenth Army before advancing into Germany.

This stalemate was broken by the Germans. Using just two large freighters, three motorised rafts and sixteen barges, von Zangen shipped 65,000 men, 225 guns, 750 trucks and 1,000 horses across the Scheldt to the northern bank over the course of just over two weeks, between 5 and 21 September – in time to play a part in the battle to come.

Allowing the Fifteenth Army to escape is generally regarded as "an enormous Allied mistake".[10] It was only one of many that resulted in the failure of Operation *Market Garden*.

## NOTES

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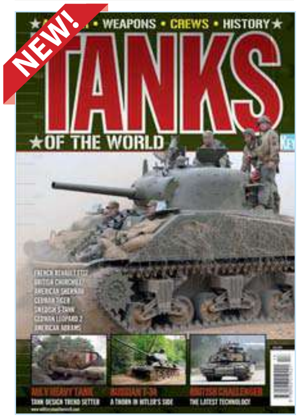
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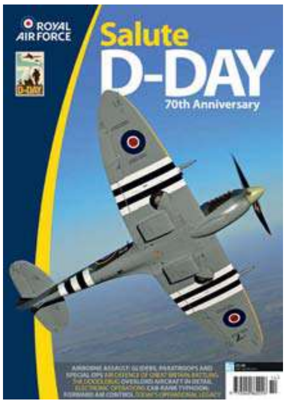
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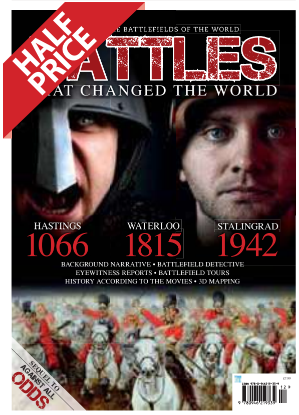
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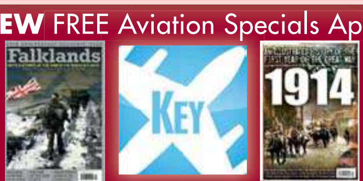
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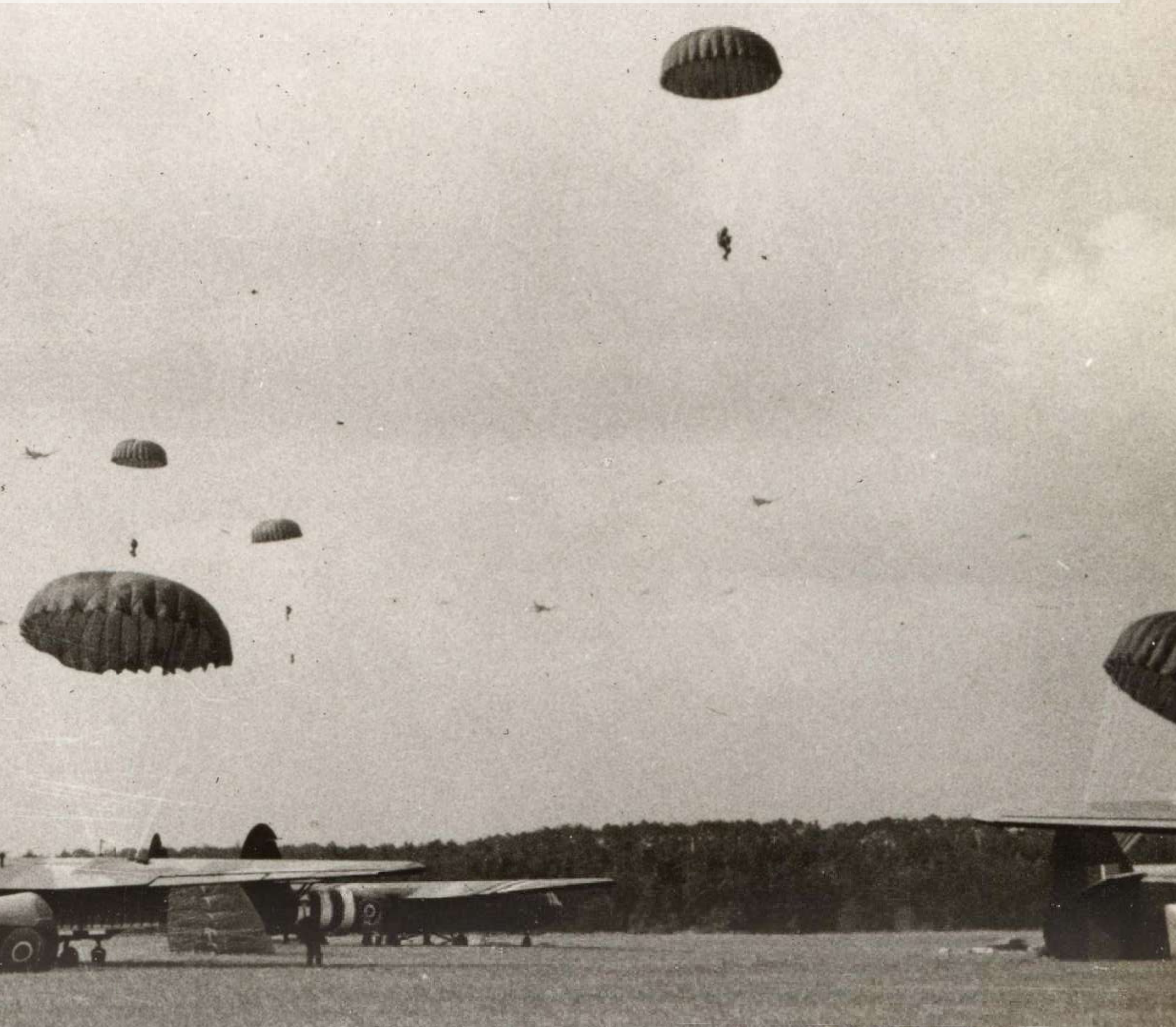
# D-DAY SUNDAY. 17 SEPTEMBER

# DROPPED BEHIND ENEMY LINES

**Conditions were good and optimism high. Before the Germans realised it, the bridges over the Rhine, the Meuse, the Waal and the Maas would be in Allied hands and the door into northern Germany kicked wide open. With such a concentration of force being delivered against a relatively narrow front, the Germans would be swept away.**



**THERE WERE no pre-dawn preparations, no attack at first light. The men of the airborne forces had a full night's sleep and a good breakfast before taking to the trucks that delivered the British and US troops to one of more than a score of airfields across England.**

"We finally arrive at the airfield and debus alongside our particular glider," relates R. Mawdsley who was serving with the Signal Platoon, HQ Company, 1st Battalion the Border Regiment of the 1st Airlanding Brigade. "The officer in charge indicates our seats in the glider. Mine is no.27 on the starboard side, very near the tail … The officer also gives us the positions we must adopt around the glider on landing. I am under the wing at about nine o'clock position …

"At last we are moving, slowly at first but gathering momentum by the second. The airfield begins to flash past and the roar of the wind buffeting the sides of the glider is almost deafening. We are beginning to lift and once we are in the air the roar of the wind decreases, but the noise of the tug's twin motors means we have to shout if we wish to be heard.

"Below us is a farmhouse, and in the yard is a small group of people and children waving at us. Little do they know that we are off to help in the liberation of Holland."[1]

## THE FLIGHT PLAN

The airborne troops may have had a quiet night, but not so the men of the RAF. Overnight, 200 Avro Lancasters and twenty-three de

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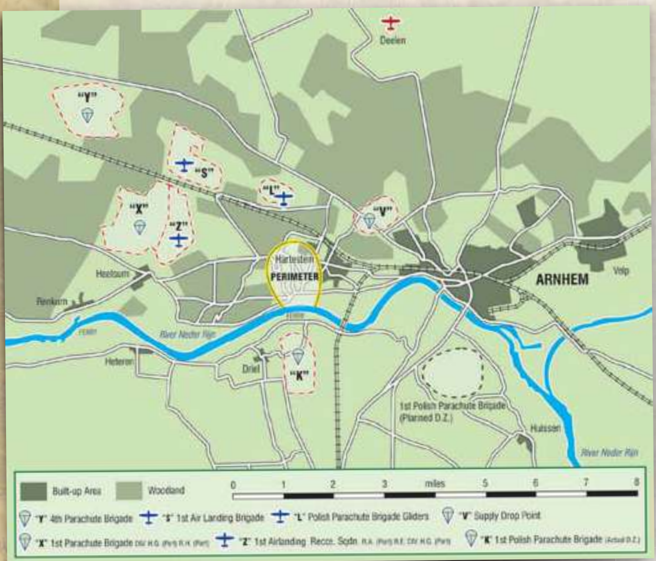
MAIN PICTURE: **The landings on 17 September 1944 underway. This is the scene later in the day at Landing Zone 'Z' near the village of Wolfheze.** (HMP)

ABOVE: **The same view today.** (HMP)


Deelen
"Y"
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"L"
"X"
"Z"
"V"
Hartestein
PERIMETER
Heelsum
Renkum
ARNHEM
Velp
River Neder Rijn
Heteren
Driel
"K"
1st Polish Parachute Brigade (Planned D.Z.)
Huissen
River Neder Rijn
Built-up Area
Woodland
0 1 2 3 miles 5 6 7 8
"Y" 4th Parachute Brigade
"S" 1st Air Landing Brigade
"L" Polish Parachute Brigade Gliders
"V" Supply Drop Point
"X" 1st Parachute Brigade
"Z" 1st Airlanding Recce. Sqdn
"K" 1st Polish Parachute Brigade (Actual D.Z.)

Havilland Mosquito Pathfinders of Bomber Command had attacked four German airfields from where *Luftwaffe* fighters were in a position to intercept the air armada as it headed over the Netherlands.[2] Anti-aircraft positions at Moerdijk were bombed by fifty-four Lancasters and fifteen Mosquitoes. The runways on all of the airfields were hit but against the anti-aircraft positions only near-misses were recorded.

On the morning of D-Day itself, eighty-five Lancasters and fifteen Mosquitoes targeted the coastal defence batteries in the Walcheren area over which some of the transport aircraft would have to fly.

ABOVE: **The main drop zones in the Arnhem area.**

ABOVE RIGHT: **American C-47 aircraft flying over Gheel in Belgium on their way to Holland during the early stages of Operation *Market Garden*, 17 September 1944.** (HMP)

TOP LEFT (OPPOSITE PAGE): **A map showing XXX Corps' breakout on 17 and 18 September 1944.**

The United States Army Air Force also joined in the attack upon the German ground defences ahead of the transports, with 817 Boeing B-17 Flying Fortresses dropping 3,139 tons on 117 anti-aircraft positions along the route and near the drop and landing zones.

The massed transport aircraft, the gliders and their tugs, were stationed at airfields in two distinct areas. These were a southern group of eight British and six US airfields, and an eastern group of eight US airfields. Once airborne, the aircraft from the southern group would form up over Hatfield in Hertfordshire whilst the eastern group would rendezvous over the Fenland market town of March in Cambridgeshire.

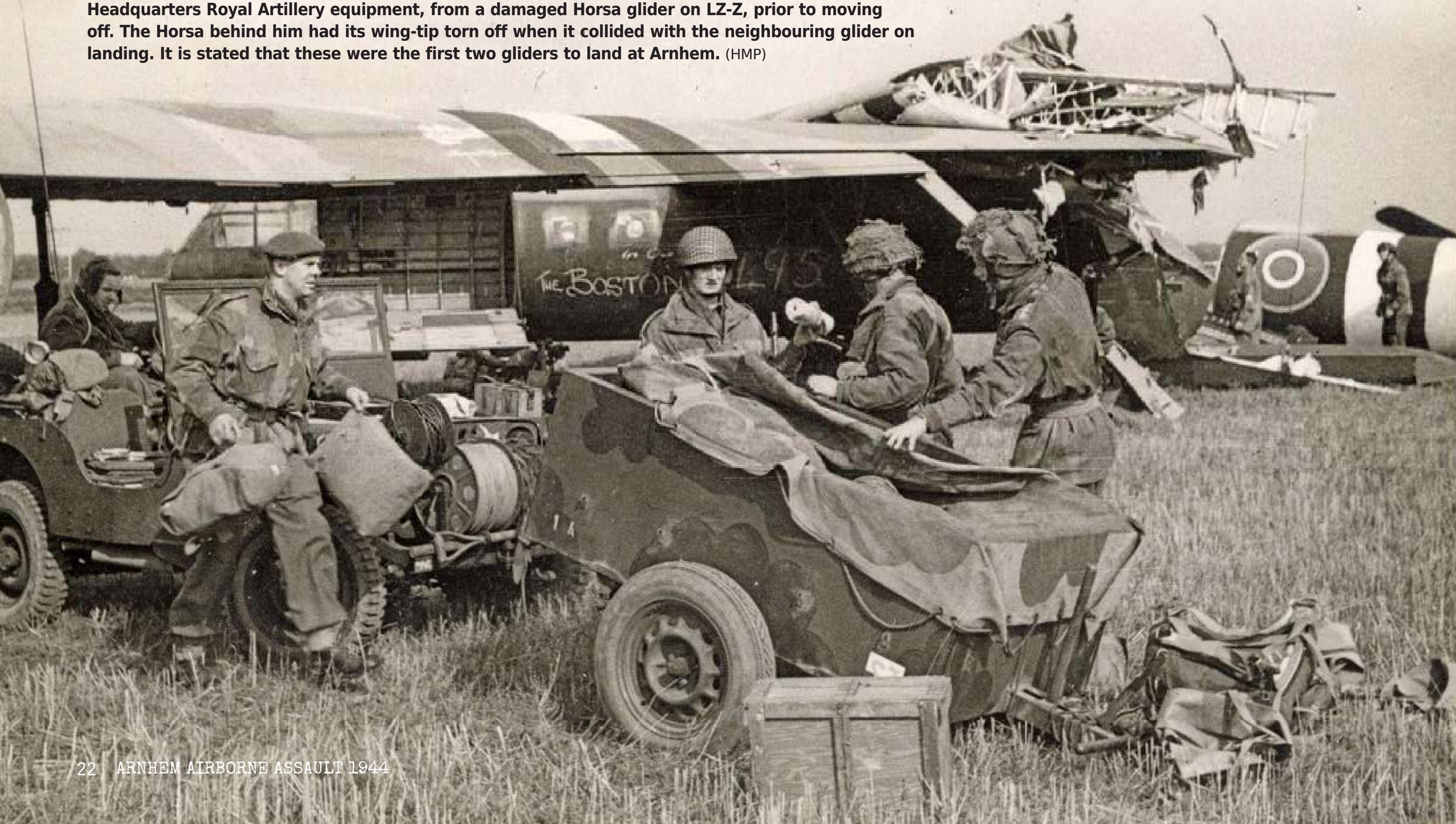
From these points, the air armada would separate. The 1st Airborne Division would follow a northern route with the 82nd US Airborne Division, whilst the 101st US Airborne would travel along a southerly route.

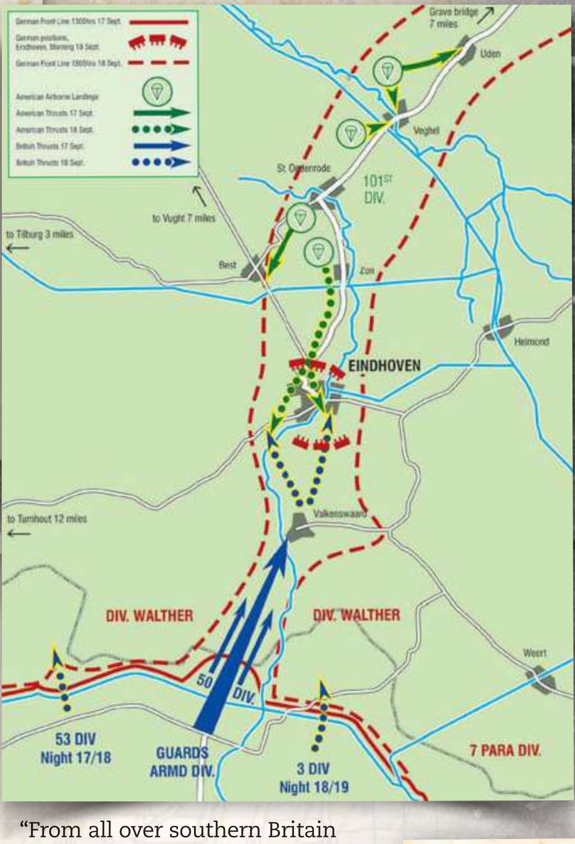
From the initial rendezvous at Hatfield the aircraft were to fly in three parallel streams one-and-a-half miles apart. Such was the scale of the operation that the streams of aircraft would take approximately sixty-five minutes to pass any one point. The attackers would also be flying over eighty miles of enemy-held territory before reaching their drop or landing zones.

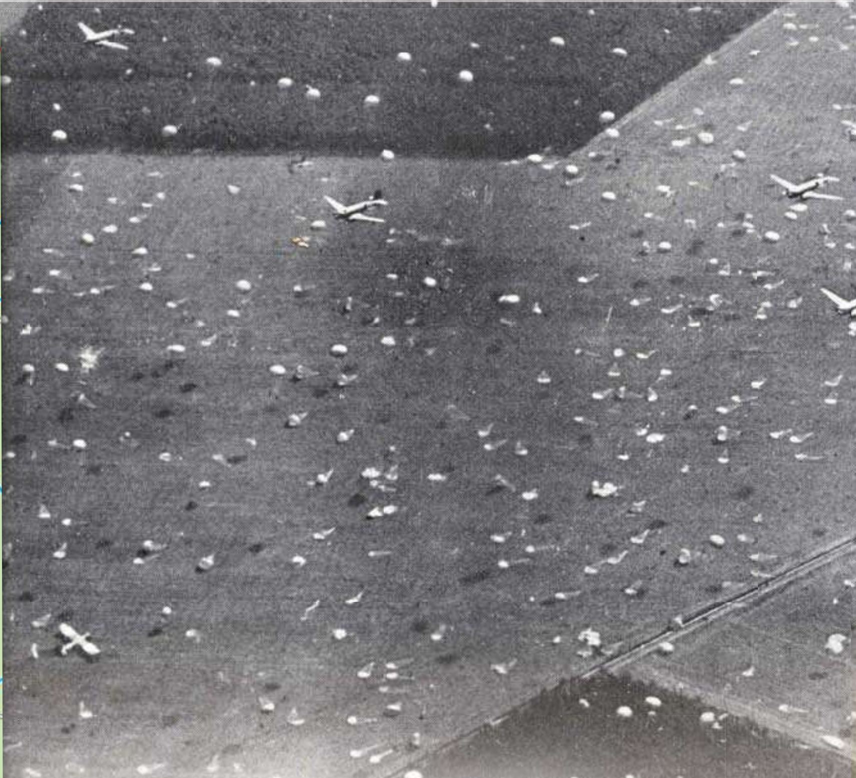
## OVER ARHNEM

After a misty start, the morning of Sunday, 17 September 1944, turned into a lovely autumn afternoon, the sky bright and clear. It was a fine day for killing.

BELOW: **Lieutenant Colonel W.F.K. "Sheriff" Thompson (second left with the two haversacks), the Commander of the 1st Airlanding Light Regiment, is pictured helping to unload equipment of the Headquarters Royal Artillery equipment, from a damaged Horsa glider on LZ-Z, prior to moving off. The Horsa behind him had its wing-tip torn off when it collided with the neighbouring glider on landing. It is stated that these were the first two gliders to land at Arnhem.** (HMP)




German Front Line 1300hrs 17 Sept.
German positions, Eindhoven, Morning 18 Sept.
German Front Line 1800hrs 18 Sept.
American Airborne Landings
American Thrusts 17 Sept.
American Thrusts 18 Sept.
British Thrusts 17 Sept.
British Thrusts 18 Sept.
Grave bridge 7 miles
Uden
Veghel
St. Oedenrode
101ST DIV.
to Vught 7 miles
to Tilburg 3 miles
Best
Zon
Helmond
EINDHOVEN
to Turnhout 12 miles
Valkenswaard
DIV. WALTHER
DIV. WALTHER
Weert
50 DIV.
53 DIV Night 17/18
GUARDS ARMD DIV.
3 DIV Night 18/19
7 PARA DIV.



ABOVE: **An aerial view from the north showing men of the 1st Parachute Brigade, 1st (British) Airborne Division, descending on Drop Zone 'X', which is already littered with gliders and parachutes.** (HMP)

ABOVE **A US airborne drop in progress on 17 September 1944. This picture was taken by a US Signal Corps cameraman who jumped with the 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment over Drop Zone 'N'.** (US NATIONAL ARCHIVES)

"From all over southern Britain now, it seemed aircraft were converging into an endless stream, which sailed on and on over roads, railways and rivers," observed the Glider Pilot Regiment's Staff Sergeant Godfrey Freeman, a glider pilot of 19 Flight, 'B' Squadron based at RAF Manston. "Over built-up areas and farmland. Over all the works of man, large and small, until at last it crossed the coastline and we were out over the North Sea. Halifaxes, Stirlings, Dakotas and our own Albermarles, each with a glider in tow, swept on in relentless throng."[3]

The gliders and transports eventually cleared the sea and headed inland. Ahead the pilots ferrying the British 1st Airborne Division could see the columns of black smoke rising from the burning buildings of the small Dutch village of Oosterbeek a short distance to the west of Arnhem.

Swarming around and above the tugs and tows were their fighter escorts, part of a force of almost 1,200 USAAF Thunderbolts, Lightnings and Mustangs, and RAF Typhoons, Tempests and Mosquitoes. Below them could be seen the tanks, armoured cars and trucks of XXX Corps of the British Second Army waiting along roads and fields for the moment when they would race towards the Rhine.

Already the 21st Independent Parachute Company, of six officers and 180 men, had jumped from their twelve converted Stirling aircraft. Their tasks were to mark the drop zones and landing zones, establishing directional radio beacons to enable the coming transport aircraft to "home" in on the exact drop point and to clear and protect the area as the main force parachuted or air landed. These Pathfinders were also able to act as an early warning if the selected drop zone was heavily defended and once the main force was down they could be employed as a small reserve or reconnaissance force.

Just two men were hit by German fire, one fatally, as they floated onto the green fields, disturbing the large-eyed grazing cattle. As the unfortunate first victim was struck his head slumped to one side, and he hit the ground with a crash and a cloud of dust.

As he landed Major "Boy" Wilson was met by a German soldier – who promptly surrendered. The

▷▷

German took him to a foxhole where there were others who saw little point in fighting. With little option, Wilson politely asked them to "hang on" whilst he organised the rest of his force.

## WHITE CANOPIES FILLED THE SKY

Next came the main force. For Trooper Arthur Barlow of the 1st Airborne Reconnaissance Squadron, which was part of the Reconnaissance Corps, the journey in the USAAF Douglas C-47 Dakota which transported him from the American air base at Barkston Heath near Grantham in Lincolnshire, to the drop zone at Renkum Heath, some eight miles west of Arnhem, had been typically uneventful.

"There had been some anti-aircraft fire once we had crossed the Dutch coast", Barlow would write, "but the accompanying British and American fighter aircraft quickly silenced the guns that were firing at us. It was a beautiful, mild and sunny day without a breath of wind and the parachute descent and landing were perfect. Some sporadic rifle fire came from the adjacent woods but our early arrival, as the first lift in, had not yet brought out the Germans in any strength."[4]

As the Horsa and Hamilcar gliders landed, some, as Lieutenant Peter Baille described, crashed into the ground: "Our pilot slightly misjudged it, and we overshot somewhat and found ourselves heading straight for a thick wood, doing about 80 m.p.h., but due to his masterly piece of flying he remained on full flap, raised the nose. And stalled it, and we hit the deck with such force it smashed the tricycle undercarriage, and we spun round and crashed into a bank. No one was hurt except for my Sgt. and myself who were slightly grazed."[5]

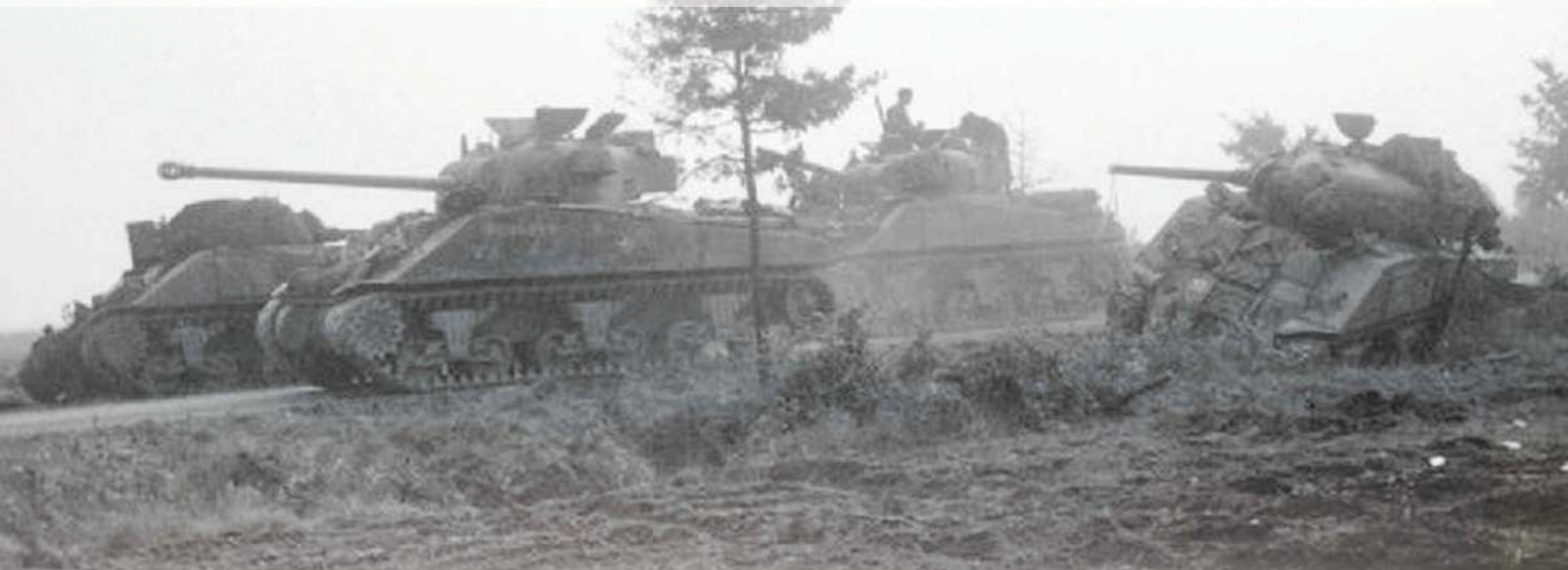
For the glider pilots, the landings were even more harrowing, especially those carrying heavy equipment, such as that experienced by Staff Sergeant Trevor Francis: "Just a hundred feet to go; hold the nose up, stall in. Look at those huge furrows! My God! We're down; the tail's coming up, and we're going over. No, kite, you can't! You'll kill us with this load behind. What's happening? My seat's rising … my head is touching the cabin roof, and it's going to push me through; it'll break me up. My head is being forced down, and I can hear my neck cracking. Oh, Oh!

"Stillness. We've stopped, we're safe, but terror hanging above me, those tons of equipment. Will the chains hold? Already I can hear the artillery sergeant cursing as he uses an axe to pound a hole through the side door which is stuck. He's through, and willing hands reach through the

ABOVE: **Dutch children greet paratroopers of the 82nd (US) Airborne Division shortly after they landed near Nijmegen on 17 September 1944.** (US NATIONAL ARCHIVES)

RIGHT: **A Horsa glider landing on one of the drop zones at Arnhem. This is a still taken from the film footage that Sergeant Gordon Walker of the Army Film and Photographic Unit took the moment that his glider had touched down on Landing Zone 'Z'. At this stage in the operation, gliders were coming in at a rate of one every nine seconds.** (CRITICAL PAST)

BELOW: **Douglas Dakota III KG423 of the RAF Down Ampney-based 48 Squadron participated in the first paratrooper lift on 17 September 1944. It was hit by anti-aircraft fire on its third sortie on the 20th and returned on one engine.** (A. HARTLEY)



**TOP:** **A Sherman Firefly tank of the Irish Guards advances past other Sherman tanks knocked out earlier during XXX Corps' advance from the Neerpelt bridge-head on 17 September 1944. The three damaged tanks seen here were actually the first to be hit as XXX Corps' moved forward.** (IWM; BU296)

"It was a beautiful, mild and sunny day without a breath of wind and the parachute descent and landing were perfect."

cabin door and ease us back off our mound of earth and broken glider."

All the gliders touched down within a few hundred yards of the Landing Zone. As Jeeps were manoeuvred out of their gliders, the fifteen 75mm pack howitzers and the anti-aircraft guns were hauled onto the grass. Thirty-eight gliders had failed to make it across the Channel, mostly because their tow-ropes had parted. Of the remaining 320, not a single glider was lost to enemy action. All, it seemed, was going very well indeed.

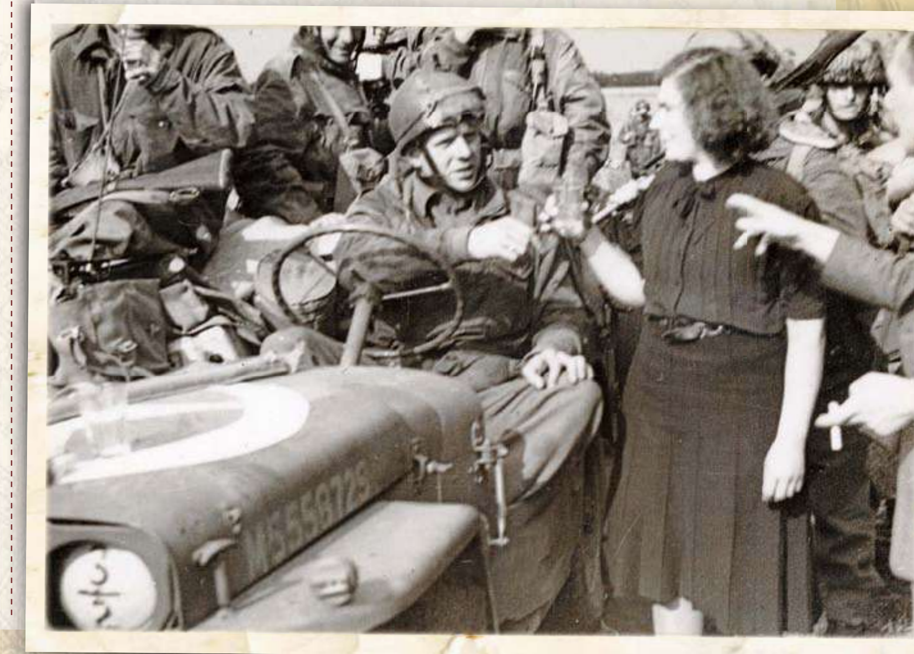
Almost immediately the gliders were followed by the paratroopers, aiming for the orange and crimson strips of nylon, held down by stones, which marked the Drop Zone. The sky was filled with white canopies, dark shapes swinging beneath.

War Correspondent Ed Murrow provided one of the first reports of the events at Arnhem – a description of US paratroopers jumping: "Just before our men dropped we saw the first flak. I think it's coming from that little village just beside the canal. More tracer coming up now, just cutting across in front of our nose.

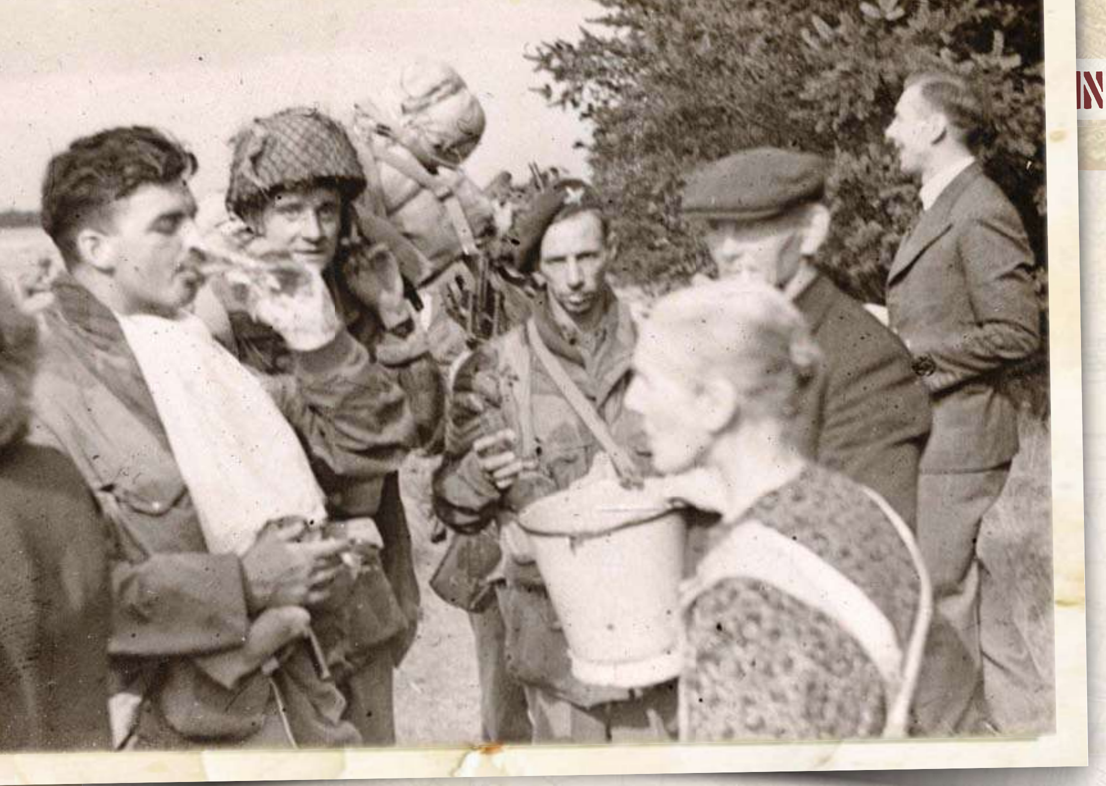
"They're just queued up on the door now, waiting to jump. Walking out of this aircraft with no flak suits, no armour plating on the ship, we're down just about to the drop altitude – there are more tracers coming up – nine ships ahead of us have just dropped – you can see the men swinging down – in about thirty seconds now our ship will drop and those fighting men will walk out on to Dutch soil."

Amongst those that jumped that afternoon was Private Cardale of the 2nd Parachute Battalion: "At last the green light and someone shouted 'Go!' Our platoon officer pushed his bicycle out first and followed it, a matter of seconds before I went also. Soon we were all in the air. It never dawned on me that it was dangerous and I enjoyed every second of the flight down after my 'chute had opened. I was loaded with gear plus a rifle on a cord twenty feet long which lightened your final descent by landing first. Weather was perfect. Landed and dazedly got up."[6]

Quickly the men who had landed successfully gathered together the ammunition and ration containers; mortars and machine-guns were unpacked and re-assembled. By 14.10 hours the parachute drop was complete and Major General



**RIGHT:** **Tonia Verbeek, with her fiancée Marinus Pennings on the extreme right of the photograph, hands a glass of water to Private Vernon Smith of No.24 Mortar Platoon, 1st Battalion the Border Regiment of the 1st Airlanding Brigade, on Sunday, 17 September. Just out of view to the left of this shot, which was taken on the Telefoonweg, is one of the "X" markers laid out on the drop zone by the men of the 21st Independent Parachute Company. Smith would be killed in action on 22 September.** (HMP)



ABOVE: **Another image from the series of images taken on the Telefoonweg. The trooper drinking is Sergeant Jim Travis of No.1 Platoon, 21st Independent Parachute Company. He had broken a bone in his wrist shortly before *Market Garden*, but had insisted on accompanying his unit, jumping with his arm in a plaster and wearing a sling. Holding the bucket of water are Mr and Mrs Pennings.** (HMP)

Urquhart formed his first tactical HQ in an adjacent wood. A total of 5,191 men were on the ground near Arnhem.

Now it was necessary for Urquhart to establish radio contact with all of the units of the 1st Airborne Division that had landed. The radios did not work; at least not properly, their transmissions reportedly being blocked by the trees. Otherwise, all still seemed to be going to plan.

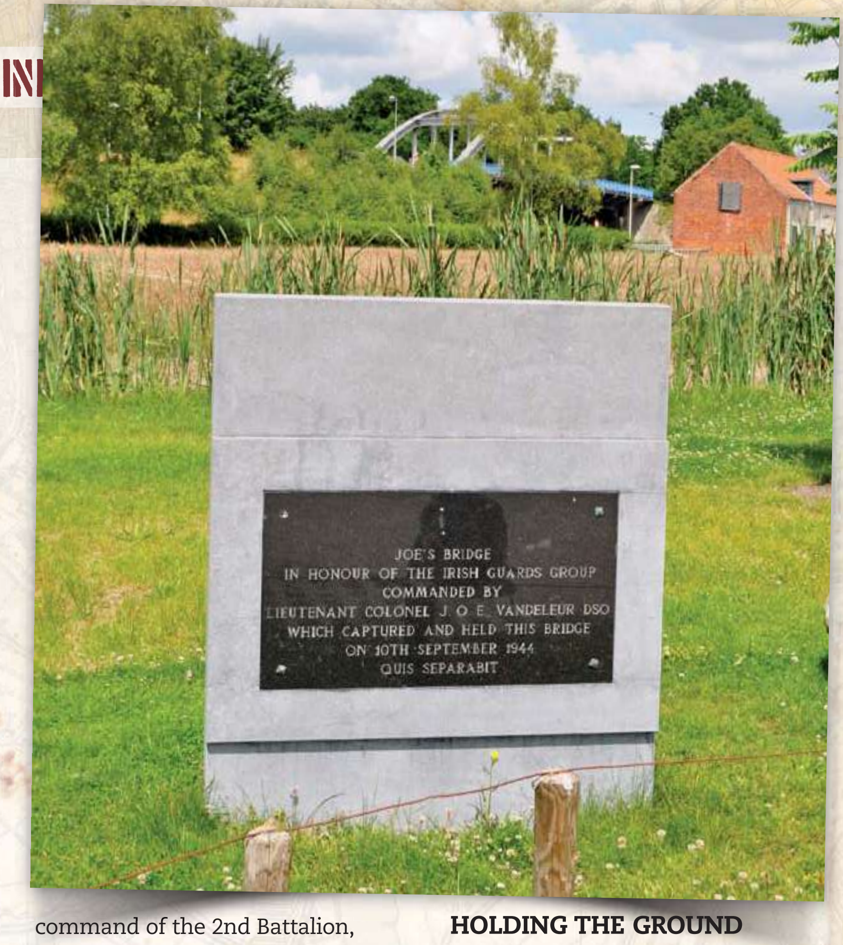
According to Regimental Sergeant Major John C. Lord of the 3rd Parachute Battalion, "everything appeared to be going splendidly … It's all too good to be true". Interestingly, Urquhart would later recall Lord's presence on the 17th, when, later that day Lord appointed himself as the General's bodyguard: "As I came out into the road, I found myself accompanied by a massive shape which turned out to be the 3rd Battalion's RSM, a six feet two inches Grenadier named Lord. 'From now on, sir,' he informed me, 'I'm your bodyguard.' Not even Generals like to admit that they need protection, and I gave some nonchalant response; nevertheless I found his presence rather reassuring."

All that, however, was still to come. In the immediate aftermath of the landings virtually no opposition was encountered. It being a Sunday, the locals who were still in their best clothes after church, looked on or waved happily. "Everything," observed a pessimistic Lieutenant Dennis Simpson of 'B' Troop, 1st Parachute Squadron, "is going too well for my liking".[7] It was now just a case of pushing on to take and secure the railway and road bridges over the Rhine.

## RACE FOR THE BRIDGE

Taking the road bridge at Arnhem was the task of the 1st Airborne Reconnaissance Squadron under the command of Major Freddie Gough, the *coup-de-main* force. This mixed body of parachutists and glider-borne troops

ABOVE and ABOVE RIGHT: **The spot where Bridge No.9 crossed the Maas-Scheldt Canal north-west of the Belgian town of Neerpelt, near the city of Lommel. This is the view looking south; XXX Corps' direction of advance was towards the photographer. The original bridge at this spot was destroyed by the Belgian Army in 1940 which the Germans replaced with a trestle bridge. The latter was captured by British troops on 10 September 1944, becoming the springboard for the ground offensive of Operation *Market Garden*. The modern road bridge, nicknamed Joe's Bridge, reputedly after Lieutenant Colonel John Ormsby "Joe" Vandeleur, the Commanding Officer of the Guards Armoured Division, can be seen on the left. Note the pavé roadway.** (COURTESY OF MARK KHAN)


JOE'S BRIDGE
IN HONOUR OF THE IRISH GUARDS GROUP
COMMANDED BY
LIEUTENANT COLONEL J O E VANDELEUR DSO
WHICH CAPTURED AND HELD THIS BRIDGE
ON 10TH SEPTEMBER 1944
QUIS SEPARABIT

RIGHT: **Originally located on the north bank of the Maas-Scheldt Canal near the embankment carrying the road up to Joe's Bridge, this memorial commemorating the Irish Guards Group has recently been moved to the opposite side of the waterway. The modern Joe's Bridge can be seen in the background. This picture was looking in the direction of XXX Corps' advance.** (COURTESY OF MARK KHAN)

was supposed to go hell-for-leather for the bridge, take the Germans by surprise and hold on until the 2nd Parachute Battalion could join them.

As soon as possible the 3rd Parachute Battalion, which had dropped further north and had a slightly longer journey, was to move to support the Reconnaissance Squadron and 2nd Parachute Battalion in defending the bridge. The 1st Parachute Battalion was to be held in reserve under Brigadier Gerald Lathbury. When he felt that the other battalions were well on their way, Lathbury would release them to take up an area of high ground to the north of Arnhem covering the road from Apeldoorn. It was believed that if the Germans at Arnhem were to receive reinforcements they were likely to come down that road.

Those at least were the plans for D-Day, but now Urquhart, still unable to contact anyone by radio, was brought some disturbing news. The few gliders that had failed to reach the Continent included those carrying some of the Jeeps in which 'A' Troop of the Reconnaissance Squadron was to dash towards the road bridge.

Major Freddie Gough still believed that with the remaining three troops he would be strong enough to overwhelm the Germans guarding the structure. Urquhart could not take that risk; 2nd Battalion would have to throw caution to the wind and get to the bridge as quickly as the men could march.

"Soon after three o'clock a message came from Brigade Headquarters," recalled Major John Frost in command of the 2nd Battalion, "telling us to move on with all possible speed, without waiting for stragglers". Everything now depended on Frost's men. There could be no doubt that the Germans were by this time fully aware of the landings and that the Rhine bridges were the obvious target of the British troops. Reinforcements would surely already be heading for the bridge? Who would get there first?

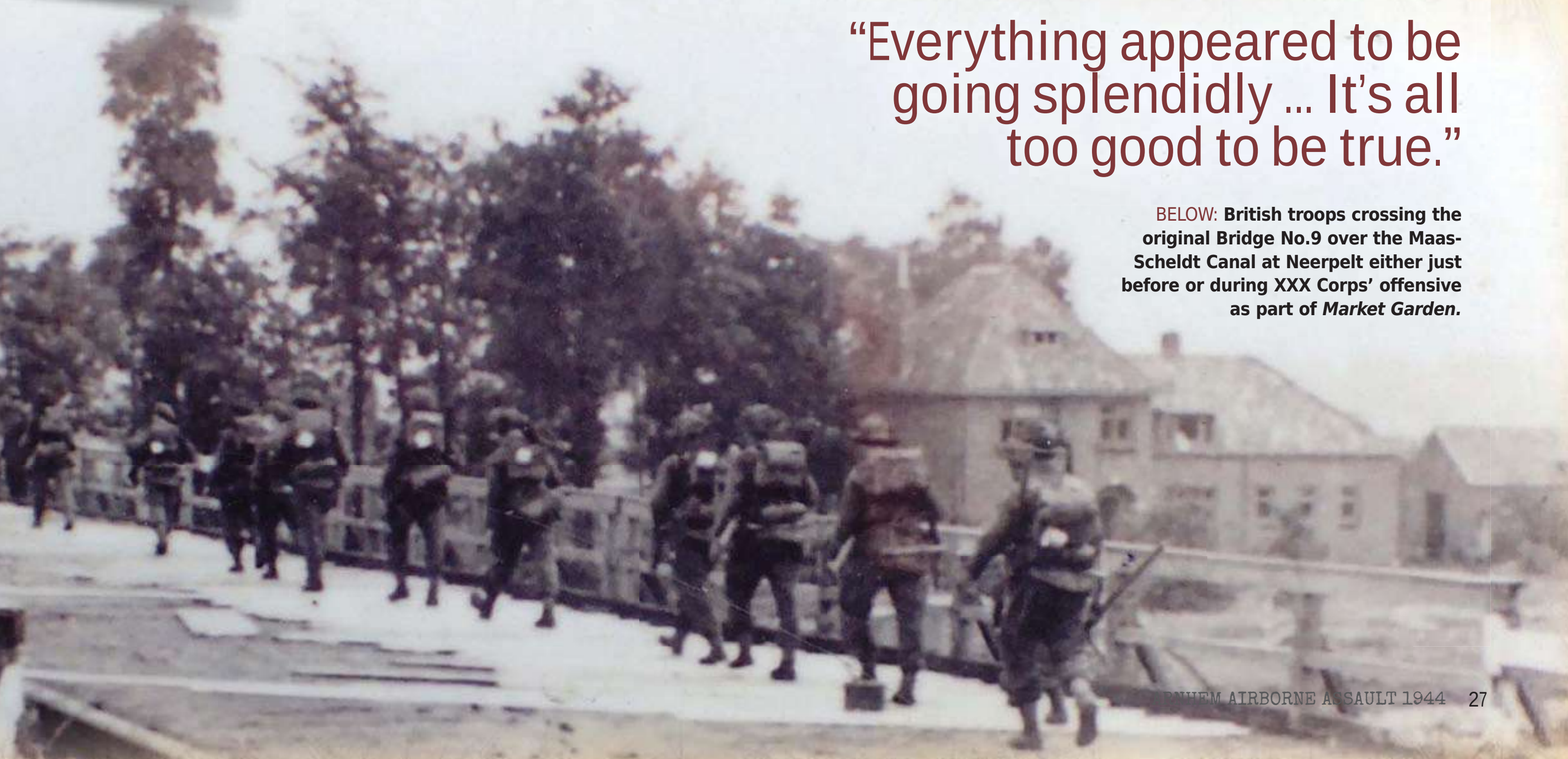
The 2nd Battalion marched off towards Arnhem. The road led through a dense wood, tangled with gorse – ideal for ambush. Yet there was no time to send scouting parties ahead; no chance to deploy flank guards. They had to push on.

## HOLDING THE GROUND

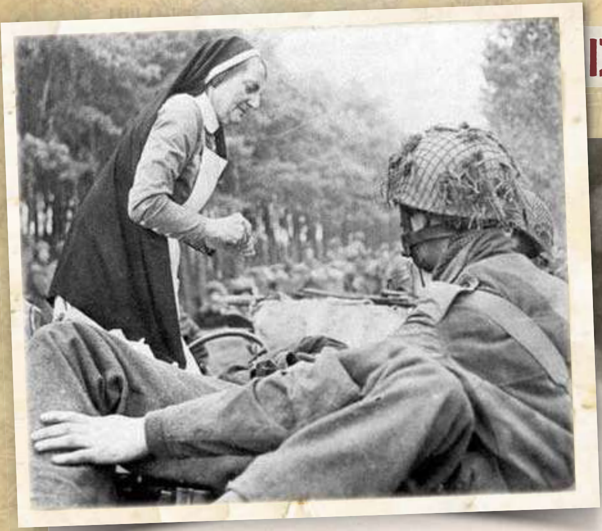
Whilst the Parachute Regiment battalions headed for the bridge, the 1st Airlanding Brigade secured all the landing zones and drop zones to ensure the safety of the second air lift on D+1.

The plan was that the 7th Battalion King's Own Scottish Borderers would cover the area to the north of the landing zones, the 1st Battalion Border Regiment would take the ground to the south and west and the 2nd Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment (space for only half of which was available on the first lift) would defend the area to the east towards Arnhem. Largely these objectives were achieved. ▷▷

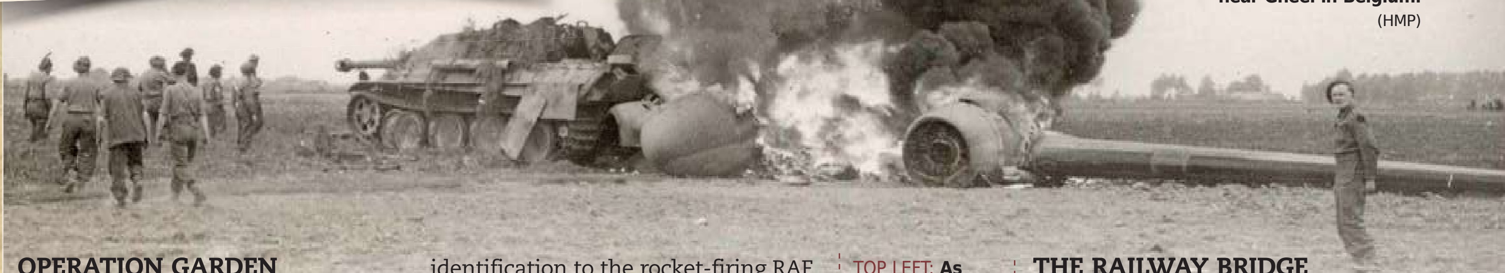
"Everything appeared to be going splendidly ... It's all too good to be true."



BELOW: **British troops crossing the original Bridge No.9 over the Maas-Scheldt Canal at Neerpelt either just before or during XXX Corps' offensive as part of *Market Garden.***



TOP LEFT: **As he moved off the landing zone, Sergeant Dennis Smith of No.5 Army Film and Photographic Unit came across this scene – he had only just landed by glider. It shows a Dutch nurse, 53-year-old Juliana ten Hoedt administering first aid to a wounded paratrooper lying in the back of a Jeep.** (HMP)



LEFT: **A USAAF C-47 aircraft, hit by anti-aircraft fire whilst returning from the drops on 17 September 1944, burns after crash-landing into a knocked-out German Jagdpanther in a field near Gheel in Belgium.** (HMP)

## OPERATION GARDEN

A little earlier, at XXX Corps' start line in front of the Meuse-Escaut Canal, its Commanding Officer, General Brian Horrocks, had looked to the sky waiting for the start of the operation. "Suddenly the armada appeared overhead. Hundreds of transport planes in perfect formation, many towing gliders, droned steadily northwards, protected on all sides by fighters, like little angry gnats which filled the sky."[8]

At 14.15 hours the signal was given and 350 guns from seventeen artillery regiments opened fire, concentrating their fire on just one mile of the enemy's front. The barrage was itself a signal for XXX Corps to move out, and hundreds of tanks and armoured vehicles began to creep forward and take up their positions in the line.

As the vehicles advanced, so the artillery barrage crept forwards at exactly the same speed, eight miles per hour. Fluttering behind each tank were yellow streamers to provide identification to the rocket-firing RAF Typhoons that roared low overhead, eight aircraft at a time every five minutes, to blast aside any remaining opposition.

Unlike at Arnhem, at XXX Corps' start line the German resistance was swift and devastating. When the Irish Guards began its advance from the British front line in the Neerpelt bridge-head things initially went according to plan – for ten minutes at least.

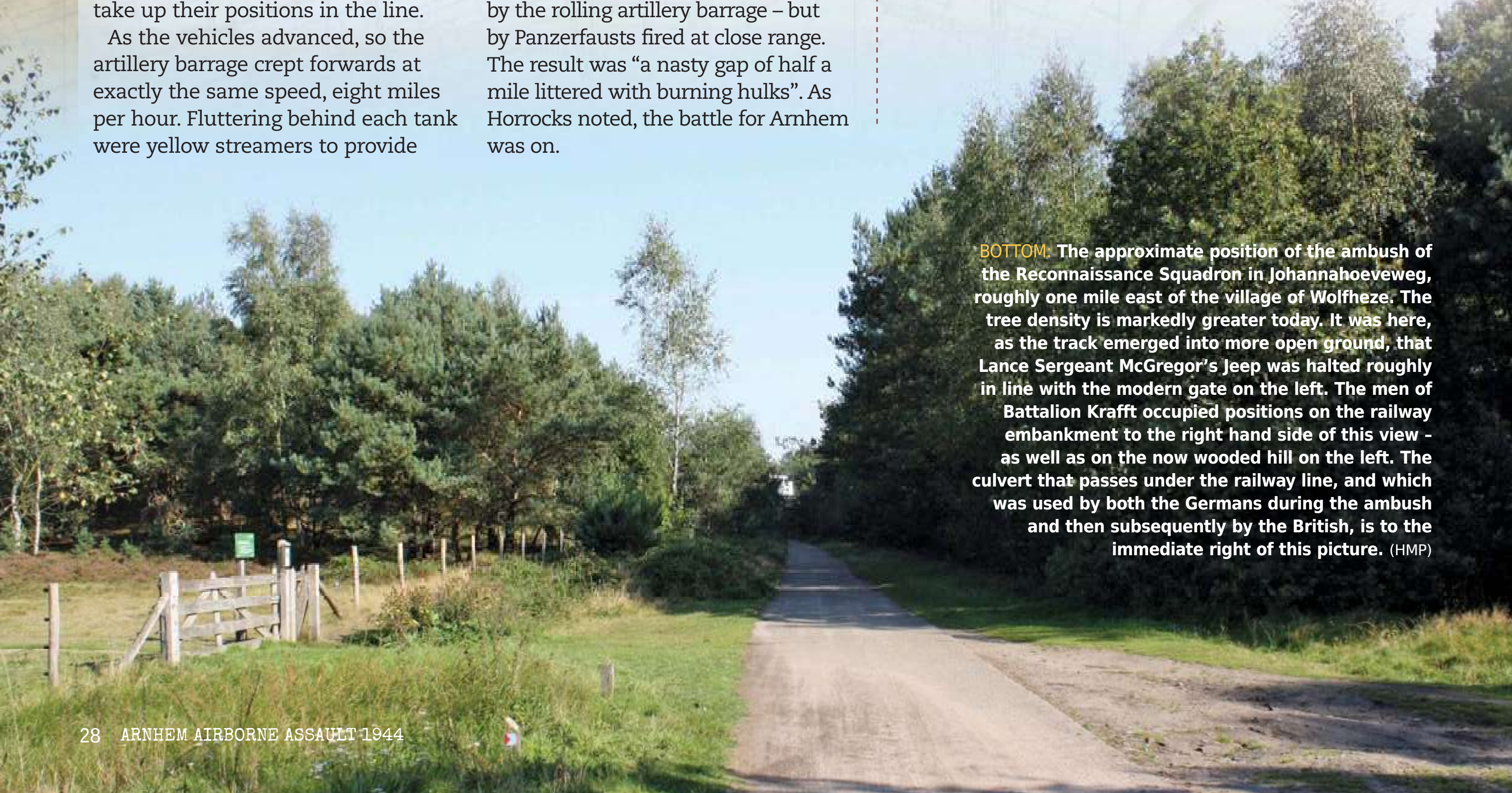
Then, within the following two minutes, nine of Irish Guards' tanks – the last three of the lead No.3 Squadron and the first six of No.1 Squadron – had been hit in quick succession. They had not been knocked out by enemy anti-tank guns – these had been neutralized by the rolling artillery barrage – but by Panzerfausts fired at close range. The result was "a nasty gap of half a mile littered with burning hulks". As Horrocks noted, the battle for Arnhem was on.

## THE RAILWAY BRIDGE

From the smiling Dutch population, believing that at last they were to be liberated, John Frost learnt that a party of SS troops had been seen in Arnhem that morning and that they might well now be covering the entrances to the town. Machine-gun fire up ahead seemed to confirm this. After the 2nd Battalion returned fire, however, the Germans withdrew and Frost's column pushed on once more.

Through Heveadorp they marched as the villagers handed them apples, pears and jugs of milk; then on quickly to Oosterbeek, and the Rhine.

Frost had planned that 'C' Company would move down to the river and take the railway bridge (which was to the west of Arnhem and nearer the landing zones) with mortars



BOTTOM: **The approximate position of the ambush of the Reconnaissance Squadron in Johannahoeveweg, roughly one mile east of the village of Wolfheze. The tree density is markedly greater today. It was here, as the track emerged into more open ground, that Lance Sergeant McGregor's Jeep was halted roughly in line with the modern gate on the left. The men of Battalion Krafft occupied positions on the railway embankment to the right hand side of this view – as well as on the now wooded hill on the left. The culvert that passes under the railway line, and which was used by both the Germans during the ambush and then subsequently by the British, is to the immediate right of this picture.** (HMP)

BERGEYK POORT DER BEVRIJDING

ABOVE: **The Liberation Gate memorial on the Belgian/Dutch border. At the time of XXX Corps' offensive there was a customs building in this area spot from where Captain J.F. Cory Dixon of 25/26 Battery, 7th Medium Artillery had an observation post to spot for the opening British artillery barrage.**

and machine-guns, whilst the rest of his battalion providing covering fire. “As their forward elements came near the bridge, the enemy opened fire from the southern bank,” Frost wrote in his memoirs, “but there was hardly a pause while our own men laid a smoke-screen and in next to no time little figures appeared on the bridge. Then we saw a general surge forward of those who had been supplying the covering fire during the first phase. Bren guns were set up on the embankment to deal with the Germans on the other side of the river and men began to cross.”[9]

The first objective had been taken with comparative ease. Or so it seemed. “Suddenly, there was a tremendous explosion,” related Lieutenant Peter Barry, “and the bridge went up in our faces.”

Captain Eric Mackay of the Royal Engineers felt the ground shake as, “a yellow-orange flame punched up and the black smoke rose over the bridge”. When the smoke had cleared the southernmost part of the railway bridge was laying half in and half out of the Rhine.

Frost had failed to secure this objective but there was little he could have done about it. His concern now was that exactly the same thing might occur at the most distant road bridge.

## AMBUSH

Despite Frosts misgivings, Gough’s Reconnaissance Squadron was making good progress. Untroubled by the loss of the Jeeps, Gough had sped off towards Arnhem believing, as he had been briefed, that all he would encounter would be “a few old, grey Germans in Arnhem and some ancient tanks and guns”. He expected, he said, that it would be “a pushover”.

Trooper Arthur Barlow remembered clearly what then happened that sunny September afternoon: “The task of leading the squadron was given to No.8 Section of ‘C’ Troop under the command of Lieutenant Peter Bucknall. No.8 Section had a complement of two Jeeps, No.1 of which contained a large wireless set fitted where one of the rear seats would be. Lieutenant Bucknall would normally ride in No.1 Jeep accompanied by myself as his wireless operator, together with his driver and a man on the Bren gun making up a crew of four … No.2 Jeep, not having a fixed wireless set, had a crew of six men comprising a Sergeant, a Lance Corporal and four Troopers, all to serve as the backup team.”[10]

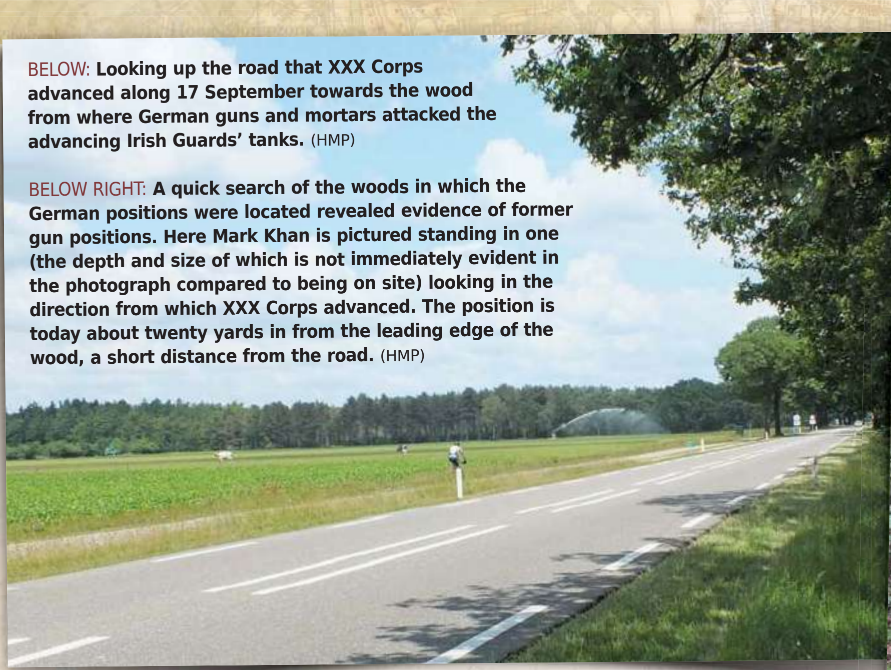
By “putting on a spurt”, Lance Sergeant Tom McGregor’s Jeep had managed to catch up with that of his Section Leader. Ahead of Bucknall’s two vehicles were the four of 7 and 9 Sections, whilst the two Jeeps of ‘C’ Troop HQ brought up the rear. Adopting the standard Reconnaissance Corps practice of sections leap-frogging each other, the Jeeps raced on.

As the vehicles increased speed, the wireless operators crouched over their No.22 wireless sets. The Troopers readied their weapons. Just twenty minutes was all that it was thought the run to the bridge would take – at least that had been the plan.

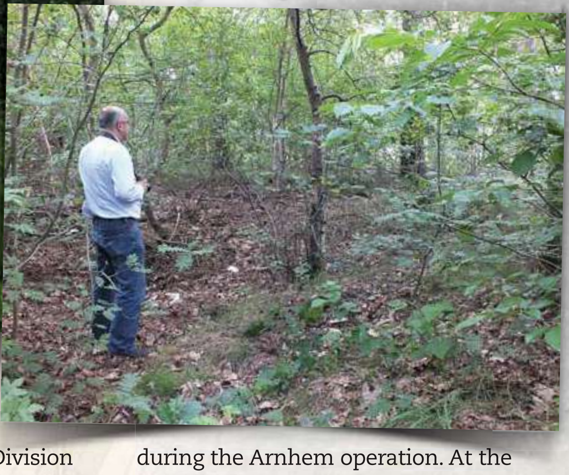
It was soon time to execute the next “leap-frog”. Lieutenant Sam Bowles duly pulled his two Jeeps of 9 Section to the side of the road. Bucknall’s two vehicles sped through, taking the lead, closely followed by 7 Section. Bumping over the level crossing by the air raid-damaged railway station in Wolfheze, the Jeeps turned right on to the road known as the Johannahoeveweg. Even today this route which runs along the north side of the railway line becomes little more than a dusty, rutted track, the trees lining it creating the effect of a leafy-tunnel.

As the Reconnaissance Squadron pushed on they unexpectedly encountered German armoured cars. Just at that moment Gough received a message to report immediately

BELOW LEFT: **A number of accounts state that evidence of the trenches and positions dug by Krafft’s Panzer Grenadiers can still be found on the hill to the immediate north-east of the ambush point. It is possible, therefore, that this shallow feature, which faces towards the spot where Lance Sergeant McGregor’s Jeep was halted, is linked to the events of 17 September 1944.** (WITH THE KIND PERMISSION OF JOHN GREHAN)



BELOW: Looking up the road that XXX Corps advanced along 17 September towards the wood from where German guns and mortars attacked the advancing Irish Guards' tanks. (HMP)



BELOW RIGHT: A quick search of the woods in which the German positions were located revealed evidence of former gun positions. Here Mark Khan is pictured standing in one (the depth and size of which is not immediately evident in the photograph compared to being on site) looking in the direction from which XXX Corps advanced. The position is today about twenty yards in from the leading edge of the wood, a short distance from the road. (HMP)

to General Urquhart. With no radio contact, the general had no idea what was going on, but this was the worst possible moment for Gough to leave his men. "The unit was now in a heavy fight and pinned down in defensive position near the railway tracks on the outskirts of Wolfheze." Nevertheless, as Gough explained, "I reckoned they would be all right for a time". After all, only light resistance was expected.

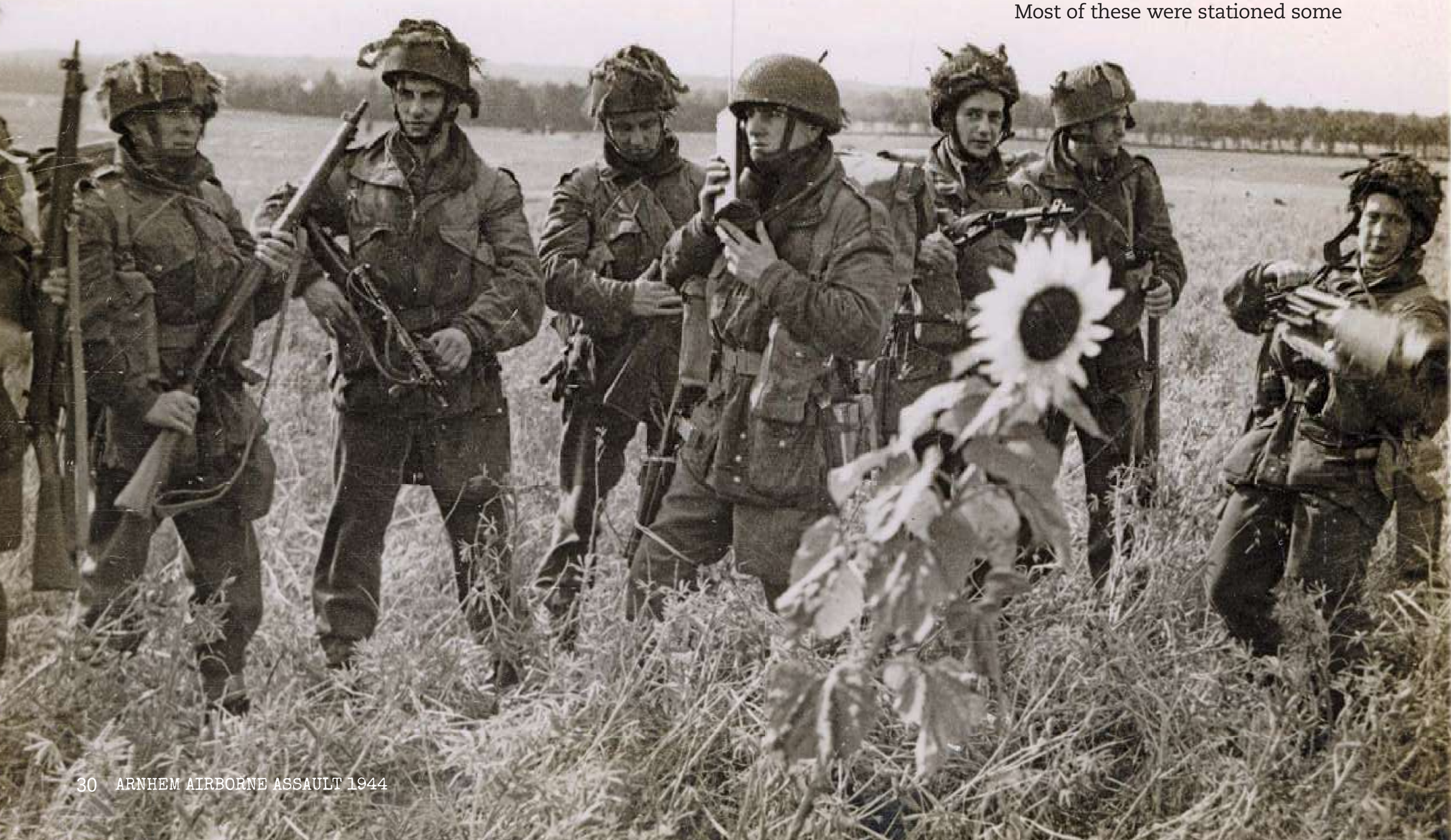
## FIFTEEN MONTHS OF TRAINING

What Gough's Reconnaissance Squadron faced was certainly not just a few old men and obsolescent tanks but elements of *Obergruppenführer und General der Waffen-SS* Wilhelm Bittrich's II SS Panzer Corps. It was not just that the 1st Airborne Division faced a tough, experienced armoured corps, what it was about to do battle with was a body that was specifically trained to combat airborne forces, as SS-*Brigadeführer* Heinz Harmel who commanded the 10th Waffen SS Panzer Division explained:

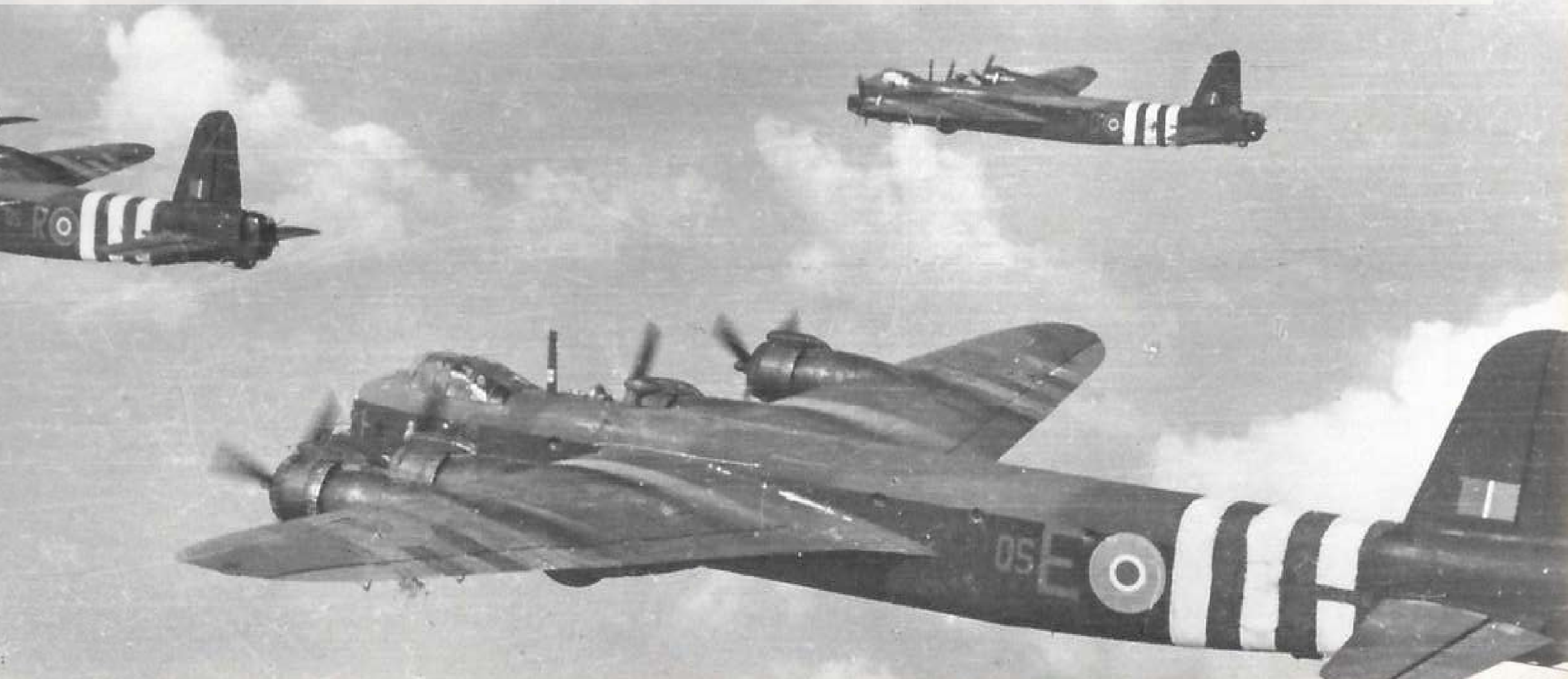
"The whole II SS Corps was especially trained over the previous fifteen months via classroom and radio exercises – all directed at countering a landing supported by airborne forces in Normandy. This training benefited us enormously during the Arnhem operation. At the lower end, NCOs and officers were taught to react quickly and make their own decisions. NCOs were taught not to wait until an order came, but to decide for themselves what to do. This happened during the fighting all the time."[11]

Recently arrived in the Arnhem area, the 9th SS Panzer Division *Hohenstaufen* was divided into nineteen *Alarmheiten*, or "alarm companies". Each of these was approximately company strength, making around 2,500 men in total. Most of these were stationed some

FAR RIGHT (OPPOSITE PAGE): The so-called Victory Bridge at Dommel. This was the first bridge taken by the British in the "Corridor" on 17 September 1944. (HMP)



BELOW: Men of the 1st Airborne Division assemble on their landing zone at Arnhem, 17 September 1944. (HMP)



ABOVE: **Led by their Commanding Officer, Wing Commander Lee in QS-X, Stirlings of 620 Squadron return to Gloucestershire from Arnhem on the first day of *Market Garden.* Along with 190 Squadron, 620 Squadron provided six Stirlings to carry to the Pathfinders of the 21st Independent Parachute Company to Arnhem. Wing Commander Lee led ten of his Stirlings to Arnhem on Saturday, 23 September; his aircraft was shot down, though all of the crew survived.** (FORDYCE COLL VIA P.H.T. GREEN)

six to ten miles to the north-east of Arnhem to cover any Allied air drops north of the town.

The enemy force that the Reconnaissance Squadron had run into was commanded by *Sturmbannführer* Josef Krafft. An astute man, like most of his officers and NCOs, Krafft was a veteran soldier. His unit, SS Panzer Grenadier Depot and Reserve Battalion 16 (usually referred to, for ease, as Battalion Krafft or *Kampfgruppe* Krafft), had arrived in the area from a position on the coast in early September. Though it was not at full strength, the morning of 17 September 1944, found Battalion Krafft bivouacked in the fields and woods between the villages of Oosterbeek and Wolfheze.

When he received the first reports of gliders and parachutists landing, Krafft was left in no doubt as to what the Allied intention was. Unfortunately for the men of the 1st Airborne Reconnaissance Squadron he acted swiftly and decisively.

Having correctly guessed the airborne force's objectives – primarily the road bridge in Arnhem – Krafft deduced that there were four main routes that the British could use to reach them. With just 400 or so men at his disposal, he knew that he could not block all four, so took the decision to deploy his men to cover the two central ones; the railway line and the Utrecht road. Without further direction he deployed his men to blocking positions which ran south-east from a position just north of Wolfheze. So rapid was their response on that fateful Sunday afternoon, the Panzer Grenadiers were in place by 15.40 hours.

## THE FIRST FIGHTS

Trooper Barlow witnessed the moment that the ambush on the Reconnaissance Squadron was sprung: "Heavy firing was heard

### 1st AIRBORNE DIVISION ORDER OF BATTLE

1st Parachute Brigade
1st Parachute Battalion, 2nd Parachute Battalion, 3rd Parachute Battalion

4th Parachute Brigade
156 Parachute Battalion, 10th Parachute Battalion, 11th Parachute Battalion

1st Airlanding Brigade
1st Battalion The Border Regiment, 2nd Battalion The South Staffordshire Regiment, 7th Battalion The King's Own Scottish Borderers

Divisional Troops
21st Independent Parachute Company, 1st Airborne Reconnaissance Squadron

Royal Artillery
1st Airlanding Light Regiment, 1st Airlanding Anti-Tank Battery, 2nd Airlanding Anti-Tank Battery

Royal Engineers
1st Parachute Squadron, 4th Parachute Squadron, 9th Field Company Airborne, 261 Field Park Company Airborne

Royal Army Medical Corps
16 Parachute Field Ambulance, 133 Parachute Field Ambulance, 181 Airlanding Field Ambulance

Royal Signals
1st Company, 2nd Company

Royal Army Service Corps
93 Airborne Composite Company, 250 Airborne Light Company, 253 Airborne Composite Company

Royal Army Ordnance Corps
1st Airborne Division Field Park

Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers
1st Airborne Division Workshop

Royal Military Police
1st Airborne Division Provost Company

TOP PICTURE: **C-47 Dakotas and paratroopers of the 1st Airborne Division silhouetted against the sky as they descend towards Oosterbeek.** (HMP)

BELOW RIGHT: **Located on the corridor up which XXX Corps advanced, the Café t'Heertje Memorial, a short distance into Holland from the Belgian border, actually commemorates events prior to *Market Garden*, more specifically those of 11 September 1944. Following the capture of Joe's Bridge the previous day, orders were passed down (reputedly from Montgomery himself) for a reconnaissance of Dommel Bridge to be made. This was undertaken by 'D' Squadron of the 2nd Household Cavalry Regiment. Just prior to reaching the bridge, the armoured cars involved halted at this spot; one continued on to within sight of the bridge where, spotting a German tank, it withdrew. At this spot, meanwhile, the British troops received a most enthusiastic welcome from the local residents, who were duly informed that the liberation had yet to follow - the Allied presence was, for the time being, only temporary. The armoured cars duly returned down the road towards Joe's Bridge, departing just before German troops arrived.** (BOTH HMP)

"During further firing from the top of the embankment a bullet went into the fleshy top part of my left thigh."

from up ahead of us. At the same time we were fired on from the front up the road and on the right from the top of the railway embankment. Reg Hasler was driving and immediately stopped the Jeep which had taken a direct burst of machine-gun fire across the front radiator.

"Jimmy Pierce, Tom McGregor and myself ran to the road verge on the right hand side of the Jeep. Dicky Minns, Hasler and Taffy Thomas were to the left of the Jeep and partly beneath it. Heavy machine-gun fire continued. Minns, being more exposed, had his hip shattered and other wounds and lay in the road bleeding profusely [and] calling for help. Thomas was hit in the foot, while Hasler was hit in both legs and unable to move. On our side of the road McGregor was to my left about four or five feet away. He raised himself up on his hands to have a look around and died immediately, falling flat on his face without making a sound, killed by a burst of machine-gun fire in the face and chest.

"I lay in a shallow ditch behind a slender silver birch tree while Pierce was behind and to the left of me. During rifle fire from the railway embankment a bullet smashed into the cocking handle slot of my Sten gun, bending it almost 'V' shaped so that it was useless. As I was firing from the shoulder position at the time it meant the bullet passed about six inches in front of my nose. During further firing from the top of the embankment a bullet went into the fleshy top part of my left thigh."

The situation was desperate. Unbeknown to Barlow, all the occupants of Bucknall's Jeep, which may well have been driving so fast that it had passed through the ambush point and was therefore fired on from the rear, were dead. Their bodies were later found lined up on the ground beside the burnt out wreckage of their Jeep.

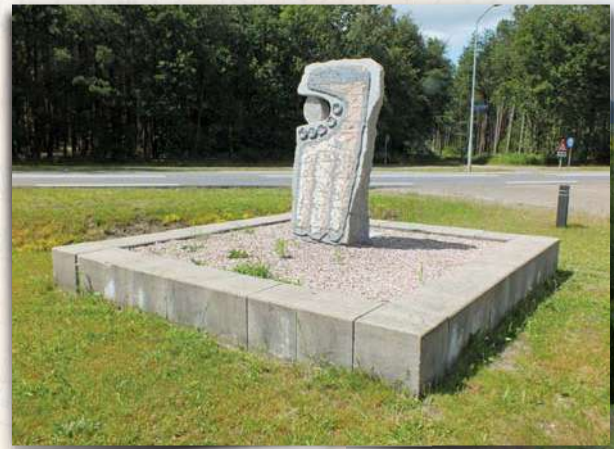
For Arthur and the surviving occupants of his Jeep, all of whom had been injured, the fight was over. "Someone at the Jeep waved a piece of white cloth. The firing from the Germans ceased and they came out from the tunnel under the embankment and down the road and so our prisoner of war days started."

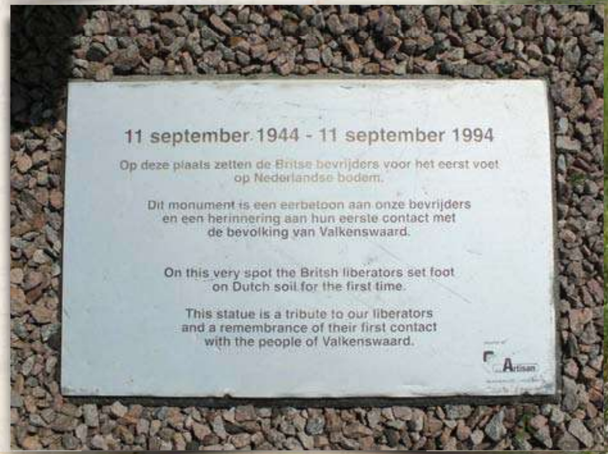
Despite the loss of the two leading Jeeps in this ambush, and the deaths of many of their occupants, the rest of the 1st Airborne Reconnaissance Squadron continued to try and push forward, both in an attempt to break through the German defences and reach their objective, and to assist their wounded comrades. However, the German sniper and enfilading rifle and machine-gun fire (particularly from Krafft's No.4 Company positioned on the railway embankment) was too effective.

## ON TO ARNHEM

The Reconnaissance Squadron's failure to reach the bridge was to prove disastrous. With the bridge still in German hands the *Hohenstaufen* Division's SS *Aufklärungs* (reconnaissance) *Batallion 9*, which had been posted to Beekbergen north of Arnhem, was able to cross the Rhine and move south towards Nijmegen, barring the road to Arnhem.

The significance of this is that when XXX Corps reached Nijmegen the following day it was not a few dozen Germans that they met, but an entire armoured battalion blocking their advance. As the renowned historian Martin Middlebrook once noted: "Rarely can the disposition of a small force such as *Sturmbannführer* Krafft's have had such an effect upon a battle". Mauled by the German ambush, the Reconnaissance Squadron just could not reach the road bridge.





11 september 1944 - 11 september 1994

Op deze plaats zetten de Britse bevrijders voor het eerst voet op Nederlandse bodem.

Dit monument is een eerbetoon aan onze bevrijders en een herinnering aan hun eerste contact met de bevolking van Valkenswaard.

On this very spot the Britsh liberators set foot on Dutch soil for the first time.

This statue is a tribute to our liberators and a remembrance of their first contact with the people of Valkenswaard.

Having been made aware that his brigade was not making the rapid progress expected, Lathbury released the 1st Parachute Battalion and sent a wireless message to the 2nd Battalion urging even greater speed. He then set out to catch up with the 3rd Battalion. Urquhart, equally anxious at the developing situation, drove off to find Lathbury. Meanwhile, Gough was still driving around to try and report to Urquhart as he had been ordered. The result was that Reconnaissance Squadron was without its commander for the rest of the battle.

Everything now depended on the 2nd Battalion. There was still a chance that the day could be saved if Frost's men could take the road bridge. To reach Arnhem, the 2nd Battalion had to pass under a railway bridge near Oosterbeek Laag Station. As they approached the underpass the paratroopers came under fire from a German armoured car on the road ahead of them. Just behind the armoured car was a stretch of high ground called Den Brink. It was evident that the Germans were holding this position – and holding up the 2nd Battalion.

"All attempts to move forward along the roads were met by fire from patrolling armoured cars," explained Frost, "while anyone appearing on the railway line was hailed by machine-gun fire and sniping". Frost ordered Major Crawley's 'B' Company to "deal with it".

In fact it was 'A' Company which had the most effect, hopping through the gardens of the adjoining houses, to take part of the German position in the flank. The enemy troops were still in command of Den Bink but Frost was able to leave 'B' Company to contain the Germans, while he pushed on with the rest of the 2nd Battalion in to Arnhem.

Frost's men crossed the Arnhem boundary at about 19.30 hours. It was starting to get dark and the road bridge was still two miles away. Moving quickly, the 2nd Parachute Battalion reached the bridge just thirty minutes later.

ABOVE: **Short Stirling IV of 570 Squadron, LK117 coded "V8-F", pictured on the return flight to RAF Harwell, from Arnhem, on 17 September 1944. This was not the aircraft's only involvement in *Market Garden*. It was, for example, damaged by anti-aircraft fire during a sortie on 24 September.** (C.H. VASS VIA R.L. WARD)

Operation Market Garden
IXth Troop Carrier Command
September 17-23 1944
434th TCG 435th TCG 436th TCG
437th TCG 438th TCG 442nd TCG
Lest we forget

LEFT: **The memorial which, located to the north-west of Son, commemorates the role of the USAAF's IXth Troop Carrier Command in *Market Garden*. This formation was responsible for operating the C-47 transport aircraft that transported the paratroopers and towed the gliders to some of the landing zones and drop zones – such as that of the 101st Airborne Division which was in the fields behind the memorial.** (HMP)

## THE BRIDGE OVER THE RHINE

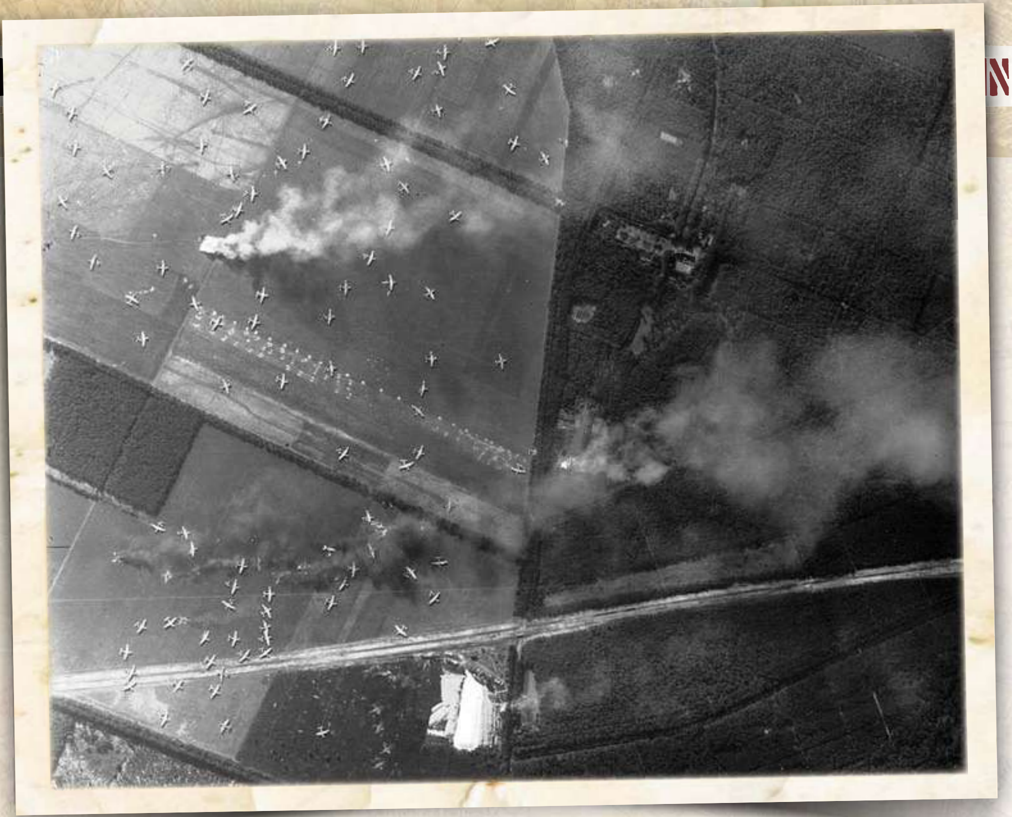
"We squeezed our way through and the leading company and headquarters actually began to run down the road until we saw the great bridge looming up ahead of us," Frost said later. "One thing we were terrified of was to see this go up like the other bridge and so we occupied it as quietly as we could in the gathering darkness."[12]

This was easier said than done, as one paratrooper explained: "The road we were advancing along was cobbled and debris was everywhere. And we all had our ammo boots, complete with regulation thirteen hobnails. God, did they make a row!"

Nevertheless, they did reach the houses by the bridge undetected. "We got into all the buildings which were controlling the bridge from the north end and we continued to let the traffic use the bridge," continued Frost. "And then, when we thought it was the right moment, the leading platoon of 'A' Company tried to go across."

The attack was watched by the 2nd Battalion's 'A' Company CO, Major Digby Tatham-Warter: "When the time came the platoon crept up the side of the embankment and began silently to cross the bridge. They had gone a very short distance when a machine-gun opened up on them at point-blank range. The effect was shattering, and they had no choice but to get back as quickly as possible to the cover of the embankment. They suffered heavy casualties …

"The fire had come from a pillbox on the bridge itself near the north end. We had, of course, seen it and checked it out in daylight and we had never thought that the Germans would risk or be able to place a gun in it after dark. The pillbox was almost alongside our forward defences in the houses by the bridge, and the machine-gunner



ABOVE: **Taken by an aircraft of the US 7th Group during the early afternoon of the 17th, this is a shot of Landing Zone 'S'. The gliders nearest the bottom of the picture are those used by the men of the 7th Battalion the King's Own Scottish Borderers, whilst those in the top two fields generally transported the 1st Battalion the Border Regiment.** (US NATIONAL ARCHIVES)

must have been a good soldier and certainly a brave man."[13]

To deal with the pillbox one platoon with a detachment of sappers carrying a flame-thrower moved forward. The sky was suddenly illuminated as the flame-thrower burst into life. "All hell seemed to be let loose after that," remembered Frost. "Amid the noise of machine-gun fire, a succession of explosions, the cracking of burning ammunition and the thump of cannon, came screams of agony and fear." A wooden building was set on fire and when a column of four German trucks arrived on the bridge, these also caught fire.

Brigade HQ now arrived to add to Frost's strength and a second attempt to take the southern end of the bridge was made at around 22.00 hours. That also failed and Frost concluded that, "it was obvious that there was no future in trying to cross from this end of the bridge ... Anyone attempting to move to the other side now would be silhouetted against the flames in a way that would be suicidal."[14] Where, though, was the rest of the 1st Parachute Brigade? Surely the other battalions must arrive soon?

## THE 1ST PARACHUTE BATTALION

Lieutenant Colonel David Dobie's battalion had met no opposition in its march towards Arnhem, but ran into Frederick Gough looking for Urquhart who told them about the Germans that had held up the Reconnaissance Squadron. Dobie decided to attack the flank of the German position. As he manoeuvred for the attack, Dobie received a wireless message from Frost at the road bridge. Dobie called off his attack to "help Johnnie at the bridge".

Moving eastwards the 1st Battalion met resistance at the railway leading to the rail bridge. As he knew that Frost had successfully reached the bridge along the southern route, Dobie by-passed the German position to follow in Frost's footsteps. It was, though, already night. The 1st Battalion was still trying to reach Arnhem as day broke on the 18th.

## THE 3RD PARACHUTE BATTALION

It was not until 17.30 hours that Lieutenant Colonel John Fitch's battalion encountered any kind of opposition. The 3rd Battalion, having been joined by Urquhart and Lathbury, pushed on into the built-up area of Oosterbeek where it met even fiercer German resistance.

"Trapped by fire from ahead and behind, the British columns scattered," wrote Cornelius Ryan. "Some men headed for buildings along the Rhine, more took to the nearby woods and others – among them, Urquhart and Lathbury – ran for safety into narrow streets of identical brick houses."

Major General Urquhart suffered the ignominy of having to hide in an attic whilst SS troops "sniffed" through the streets below, before parking a self-proplled anti-tank gun near the front door of the house in question. The Airborne Division's commander was now not only out of touch with the rest of his units, he was trapped in a confined area utterly unable to affect the course of the battle. Despite extraordinary efforts to extricate himself, Urquhart was still isolated in Oosterbeek as night turned to day.

## THE US 101ST AIRBORNE DIVISION

Earlier in the day, 6,769 men of the 101st Division, the "Screaming Eagles", had been dropped with minimal casualties and little loss of equipment. The only potential problem was that none of the corps signals units had reached the landing zone. This meant that Major General Maxwell Taylor could not communicate with either XXX Corps or with Browning's HQ.

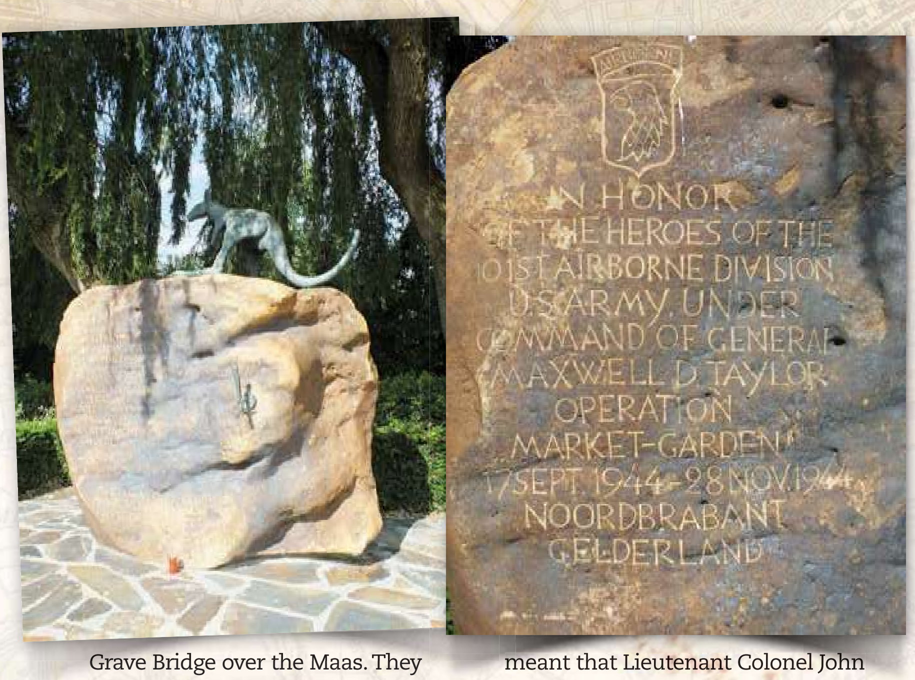
Taylor's first objective was the Zuid-Willemsvaart Canal bridge northwest of Eindhoven at Son. Two battalions of the 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment were within fifty yards of the bridge when it was blown up by the defending Germans. Fortunately the centre span of the bridge was still intact and the American engineers swiftly constructed a bridge of ropes and wood. The 101st also captured a second bridge over the canal as well as the road and rail bridges over the River Veghel.

## THE US 82ND AIRBORNE DIVISION

To the north of the Screaming Eagles, the US 82nd Airborne Division, 7,467 strong, successfully captured the

BELOW RIGHT: **This depiction of a Horsa glider can be seen standing today at what was the south-west corner of Landing Zone 'L' – which is the open area behind it in this view.** (HMP)

LEFT: **Looking north across the British landing zones. The road on the right, the Telefoonweg, bisects Drop Zone 'X' and Landing Zone 'X'. At the end of this road by the trees was the Reconnaissance Squadron rendezvous point on 17 September.** (HMP)



LEFT: **The memorial to the 101st Airborne Division in Veghel, a small town between Eindhoven and Nijmegen. The memorial is topped by a sculpture of a kangaroo with a baby in its pouch to symbolize the Allied forces leaping over the Dutch rivers. There is also a plaque on the ground commemorating the town's liberation on 17 September by the 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment.** (BOTH HMP)

Grave Bridge over the Maas. They also succeeded in capturing one of the vitally important bridges at Moelenhoek over the Maas-Waal canal, and the lock-bridge at Heumen. The Americans were actually advancing towards the Moelenhoek Bridge when they saw a German rushing towards the control building for the demolition charges. They shot him down as he ran.

The 82nd failed to capture the main Nijmegen highway bridge which, mistakenly, was not given immediate priority. Instead Brigadier-General James Gavin concentrated on securing the high ground at Groesbeek where he set up a blocking position to prevent anticipated German counter-attacks being delivered from the nearby Reichswald. By the time the 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment, which had been dropped many miles from Nijmegen, reached the bridge it was too late, as the SS *Aufklärungs Batallion* 9, having sped down from Arnhem was already there. The American attack was beaten off, leaving the vital Nijmegen bridge in German hands.

## GUARDS ARMOURED DIVISION

Spearheading XXX Corps' advance was the Guards Armoured Division. Its objective for 17 September was to make contact with the US 101st Division. The communications failures meant that Lieutenant Colonel John Ormsby "Joe" Vandeleur, the Guards Armoured Commanding Officer, did not know what was happening ahead.

German artillery were encountered in positions defending a small bridge over the River Dommel, and Vandeleur called in an air strike to clear the way – only to be told that the Typhoons were grounded due to fog. The German guns held up XXX Corps for two hours. Nevertheless, led by the Irish Guards the division broke out of the bridgehead on the Meuse-Escaut canal in Belgium and by 15.00 hours had crossed into the Netherlands.

There the Guards met stiff opposition and when night fell had only travelled seven of the thirteen miles to Eindhoven. "Every time the advance seemed to be progressing," the Grenadier Guards reported, "a canal or stream would intervene with a bridge that invariably broke after a couple of tanks had crossed."[15]

Instead of driving on through the night to reach Eindhoven, the Guards halted at the town of Valkenswaard, fifty-seven miles from Arnhem. Vandeleur saw no need for haste, declaring that he had learnt that the bridge over the Son Canal had been destroyed and that bridging equipment would have to be brought up before any further advance could be made. "Push onto Eindhoven tomorrow, old boy," Brigadier Norman Gwatkin, who commanded the 5th Guards Armoured Brigade, advised Vandeleur, "but take your time".[16]

## THE END OF THE DAY

D-Day ended with few of the main objectives having been achieved. Apart from the strength of the German forces they encountered, the main problem that the airborne troops had faced was, in the case of both the 1st Airborne Division and the 82nd Division, that they had to march too great a distance from their landing and drop zones to their objectives. This had given the enemy time to respond and, albeit hastily, prepare some form of defence.

Few operations go to plan, of course, and this was only the first day of *Market Garden*. All might yet come good. Everything depended on what would happen on D+1. ●

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14. Tony and Valmai Holt, *Major & Mrs Holt's Battlefield Guide to Market-Garden* (Pen & Sword, Barnsley, 2004), p.253.
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16. David Bennett, *A Magnificent Disaster, The Failure of Market Garden, the Arnhem Operation, September 1944* (Casemate, Newbury, 2008), p.67.

BELOW: **A paratrooper of the US 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, one of four infantry regiments of the 82nd Airborne Division, pictured landing on Drop Zone 'N' on 17 September. Whilst it looks like a rough landing, it is in fact a textbook touch down, the paratrooper being photographed whilst rolling his body to absorb the shock of the impact.** (US NATIONAL ARCHIVES)

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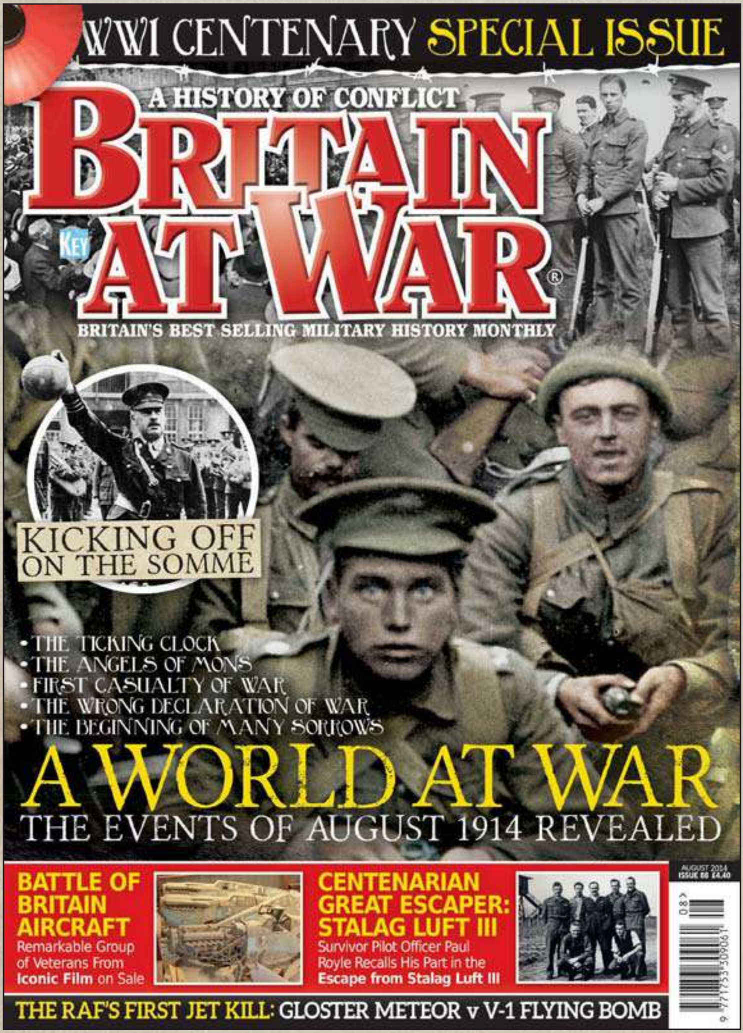

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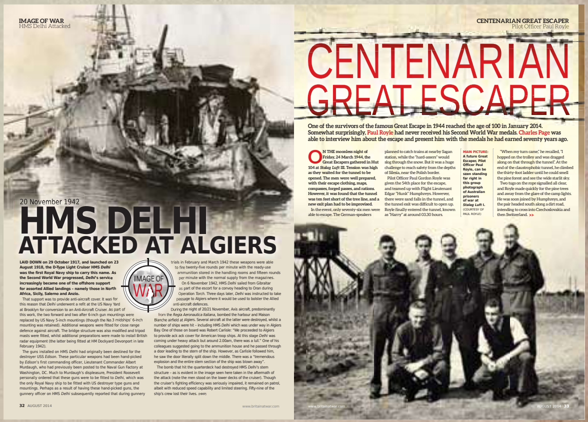

20 November 1942

HMS DELHI ATTACKED AT ALGIERS

CENTENARIAN GREAT ESCAPER

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**THE MAIN factors on day two, Monday, 18 September 1944, would be the arrival of the remainder of the airborne troops, the thrust through Nijmegen by XXX Corps and the effectiveness of the various German counter-measures. All was still to play for at Arnhem.**

If the 1st and 3rd Parachute Battalions could reach the road bridge quickly that morning, the limited number of German defenders would have extreme difficulty holding the southern end. Enemy strength, however, was building, so early success was essential.

At 04.30 hours the 3rd Parachute Battalion, with Major General Urquhart and Brigadier Lathbury still present, recommenced its move towards the bridge. The road ahead was still held by the enemy, and so an attempt was made to move south to follow the route Major Frost's battalion had taken. The 1st Battalion, with even further to march, had also chosen to take that same route. The Germans, though, were well aware that the paratroopers were aiming to reach the bridge and had blocked all the routes with infantry, armoured cars and 20mm anti-aircraft guns, as Private Walter "Bol" Boldock related: "We were halted at a cross roads in Oosterbeek. It looked as if we would be there forever … [then] we were moving again, into Arnhem. Smoke and fire darkened the streets. Broken glass and

# MONDAY, 18 SEPTEMBER D+1

# THE GERMANS HOLD THEIR GROUND

Day One of Operation *Market Garden* had not gone to plan. Instead of the third-rate German troops that the British 1st Airborne Division had expected to encounter at Arnhem, two Panzer divisions blocked their path. Reinforcements, however, were on their way.

broken vehicles, debris littered the roads ... At the bridge things were hotting up. Casualties were very high. Dead strewed the buildings at its approach. Wounded fell out, received attention – and fell in again, to be re-wounded in turn, or killed. The Second Battalion held on, bloody but unbowed waiting for the Second Army – and waiting for us, the First Battalion."

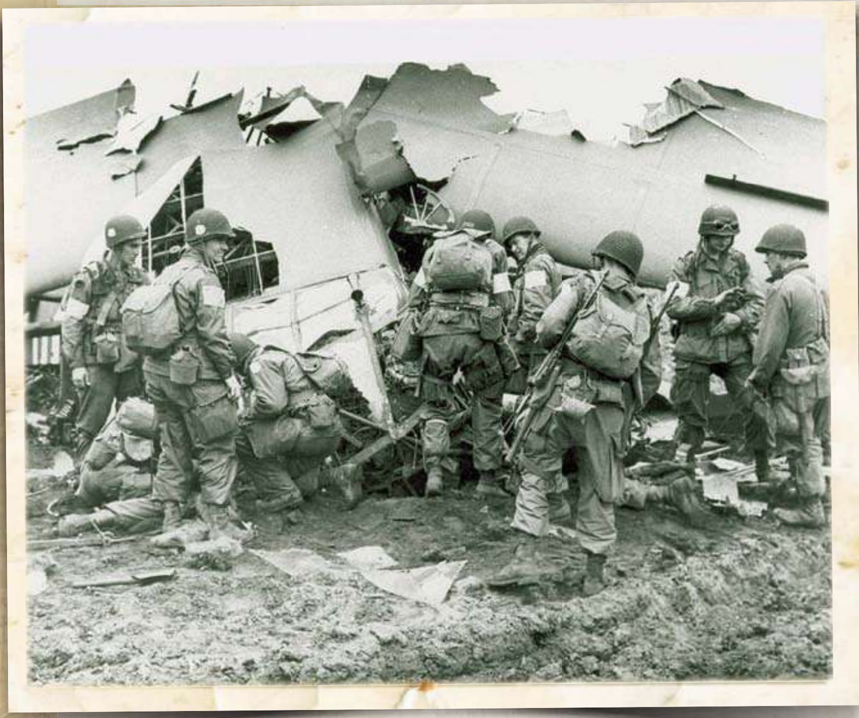
As well as preventing the rest of the 1st Parachute Brigade from reaching the bridge, *Generalfeldmarschall* Model also wanted to guard against British reinforcements arriving by air and so he sent *General der Infanterie* Hans von Tettau, with a mixed force roughly equivalent to the strength of five battalions, to seize the landing and drop zones. These were defended by Brigadier Philip "Pip" Hicks' Airlanding Brigade.

With Urquhart and Lathbury both seemingly missing, Hicks had assumed command of the Airborne Division. He was, however, aware that the 2nd Parachute Battalion had reached the bridge and that the other two battalions were unable to force their way through the German line. It is thought that Hicks was informed of the state of the battle through the artillery units whose communications were working well.

Hicks had to decide what his next move would be – and he made a bold choice. Though the Airlanding Brigade's sole purpose was to defend the drop zone on the southern part of Ginkelse Heide (or Ginkel Heath) until the second airlift arrived, he sent the 2nd Battalion the South Staffordshire Regiment to join the parachute battalions to help them push onto the bridge. ▷▷

MAIN PICTURE: **Men of the 2nd Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment pictured entering Oosterbeek, along the Utrechtseweg, on their way towards Arnhem late on 18 September 1944. The fence on the left is part of the Sonnenberg estate.** (HMP)

RIGHT: **Another view of the 2nd Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment making its way along the Utrechtseweg towards the road bridge over the Rhine in Arnhem.** (HMP)



LEFT: **The costs of the landings on the first day of *Market Garden* became clearer on the 18th. Here US troops work to extricate the trapped pilots of a CG-4A Waco glider after it crashed on Landing Zone 'W' following a collision with another landing glider (the pilot of one had been wounded and blinded, leading to the crash). Most of the men seen here are from the 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment.** (US NATIONAL ARCHIVES)

Moving off at 10.30 hours the South Staffs came under air attack from *Luftwaffe* fighters and German snipers. They got as far as the western quarter of Arnhem before running into trouble, barely a mile from the bridge. "We now came to the wide open exposed, riverside stretch of road in front of St. Elisabeth's Hospital," remembered Private Robert C. Edwards of the South Staffs, "then everything suddenly let loose. We must have looked like targets in a shooting gallery. All Jerry had to do was line up his guns and mortars on this one gap – about a quarter of a mile wide – and fire. He couldn't miss."[1]

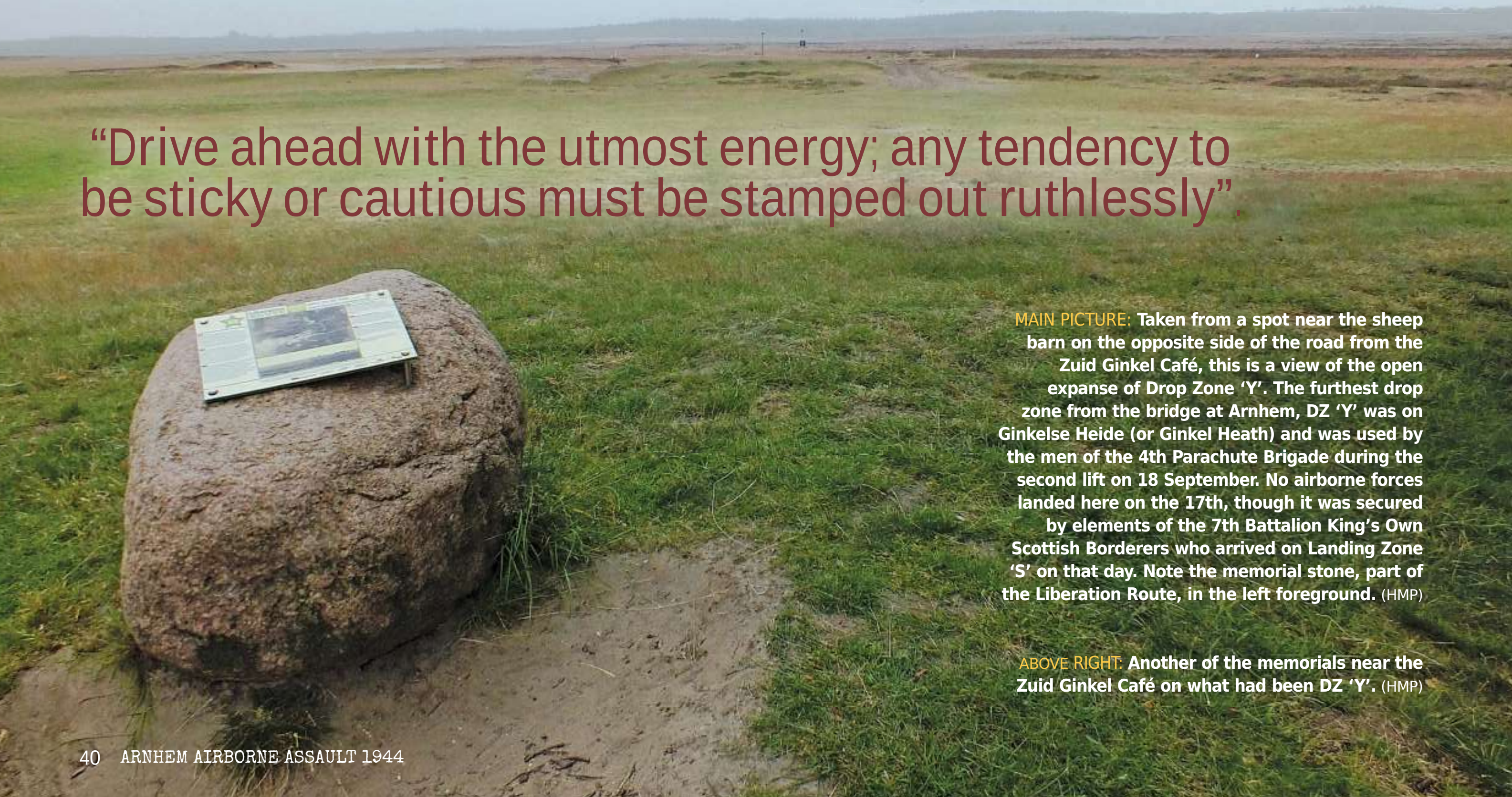
The South Staffs managed to join up with the 1st Parachute Battalion on the outskirts of Arnhem, having taken most of the day to fight their way to that point. They found that Lieutenant Colonel Dobie had only around seventy men left, so, with night approaching it was decided to hold the ground they occupied rather than risk fighting through the streets in the dark.

## BATTLE ON THE BRIDGE

At the bridge, Frost was at least happy that he had secured the most important side of the structure (the northern) and had cut all the wires that could find that might lead to any detonation charges. He had also strewn the bridge with mines. All he had to do now was hang on until the rest of his battalion ('C' Company and No.4 Platoon of 'B' Company had so far been unable to reach the bridge) and the other battalions of the division could join him. Then, in time, they could all welcome the arrival of the tanks of XXX Corps.

A few men of other units had either marched with the 2nd Battalion or had managed to join Frost. These included part of Captain Eric Mackay's 9th Field Company, Royal Engineers, numbering around thirty men; and No.3 Platoon, 250 (Airborne) Light Composite Company, Royal Army Service Corps, with forty men. The Headquarters, plus 'B' Troop and one gun team from 'C' Troop of 1st Airlanding Anti-Tank Battery Royal Artillery, provided additional support. There was also approximately forty-five men of the 3rd Battalion and seventy-five men of the 1st Battalion. With the 1st Parachute Brigade's HQ, including the Defence Platoon and the Signals Section, Frost had around 640 men to defend the crossing of the Rhine.

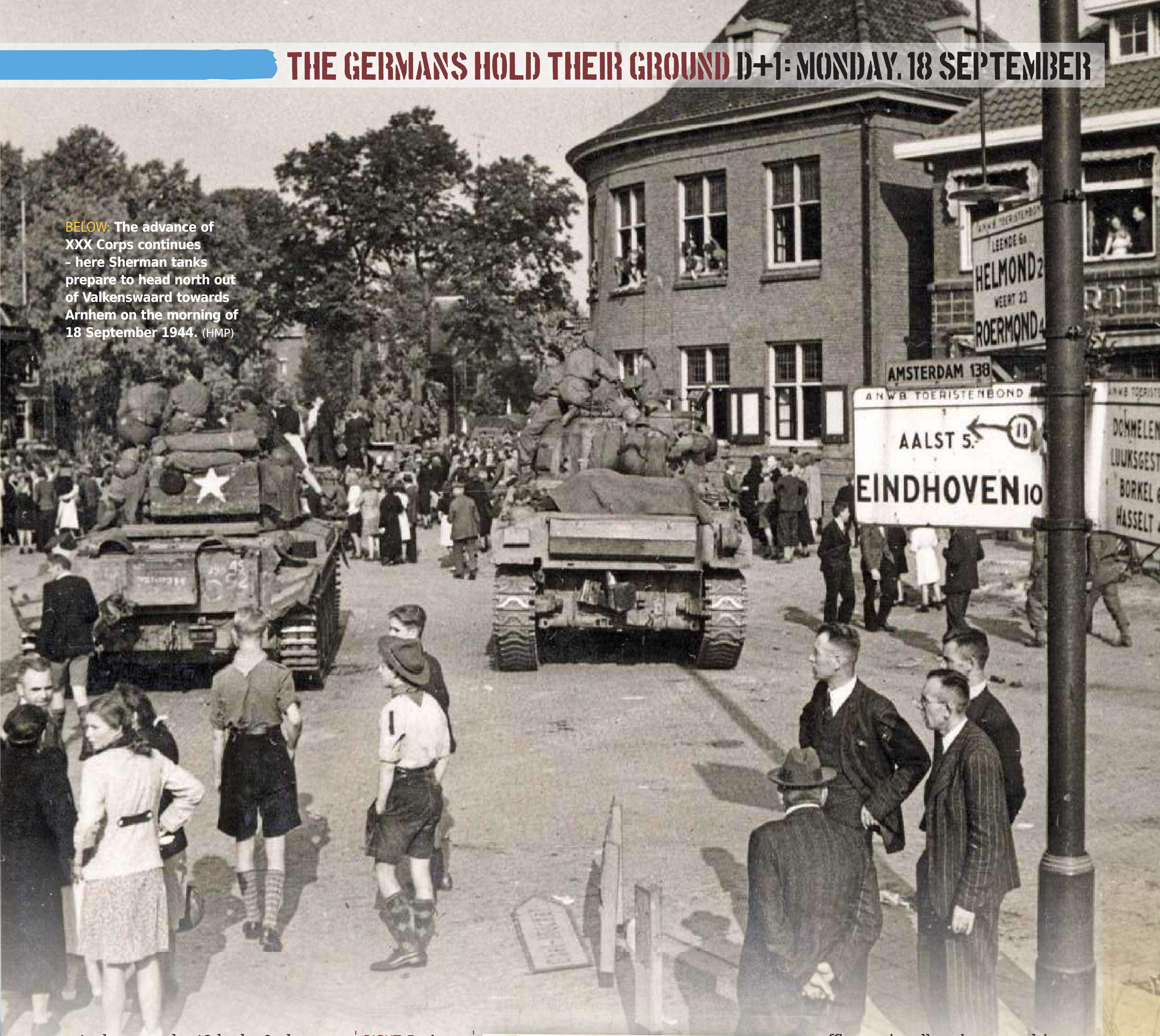
LUCHTLANDING
17-18.SEPT.1944



"Drive ahead with the utmost energy; any tendency to be sticky or cautious must be stamped out ruthlessly".

MAIN PICTURE: **Taken from a spot near the sheep barn on the opposite side of the road from the Zuid Ginkel Café, this is a view of the open expanse of Drop Zone 'Y'. The furthest drop zone from the bridge at Arnhem, DZ 'Y' was on Ginkelse Heide (or Ginkel Heath) and was used by the men of the 4th Parachute Brigade during the second lift on 18 September. No airborne forces landed here on the 17th, though it was secured by elements of the 7th Battalion King's Own Scottish Borderers who arrived on Landing Zone 'S' on that day. Note the memorial stone, part of the Liberation Route, in the left foreground.** (HMP)

ABOVE RIGHT: **Another of the memorials near the Zuid Ginkel Café on what had been DZ 'Y'.** (HMP)



BELOW: **The advance of XXX Corps continues – here Sherman tanks prepare to head north out of Valkenswaard towards Arnhem on the morning of 18 September 1944.** (HMP)

At dawn on the 18th, the 2nd Battalion stood to, expecting an attack. The first Germans to arrive, though, were in a number of trucks which drove on to the bridge from the north, clearly unsure of exactly what was happening. Before they realised that the paratroopers were in the houses next them, they were torn apart by a hail of bullets; the few survivors surrendered.

Behind them, though, came a column of German armoured cars. Seven of these were picked off by the guns of the 1st Airlanding Anti-Tank Battery RA. German infantry joined in the action, and a serious engagement began. “All around the battle raged,” wrote Frost. “Mortar bombs and shells were landing. Behind each window and on every rooftop snipers and machine-gunners lay ... There were no exceptions from the fighting line, all ranks and trades were in it. Staff officers, signallers, batmen, drivers and clerks, all trades lent a hand.”[2]

RIGHT: **During the 18th, German units began to attack Landing Zones ‘T’ and ‘N’. Amongst the enemy forces, many of which were hastily assembled from rear-echelon, security or training units, was the 600-strong *Kampfgruppe* Jenkel, some of whom are pictured here and who appear to be *Luftwaffe* personnel.** (BUNDESARCHIV, BILD 101I-590-2333-11/ APPE[ARPPE]/ CC-BY-SA)

Eventually, after around two hours the Germans called a halt to their attack. The 2nd Battalion still held the bridge. Frost, though, had received some unwelcome news. Amongst the enemy prisoners were members of the II SS Panzer Corps. He now knew that he was facing a formidable foe.

Throughout the day small groups of the enemy continued to attack the 2nd Battalion’s positions. The paratroopers, of course, had to respond, but with each shot fired their stock of ammunition was depleted further. No more ammunition could be expected until the other battalions broke through and opened up the way to the divisional ammunition dumps. Frost had no choice but to order his men to stop long-distance sniping at the enemy to reserve their

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# D+1: MONDAY, 18 SEPTEMBER THE GERMANS HOLD THEIR GROUND

RIGHT: **Another view of men of *Kampfgruppe* Jenkel on 18 September 1944. The men in this image have been captioned in some accounts as being from a *Landesschützen-Bataillone* which were home duties battalions which used men from older age classes and soldiers not totally fit for front line roles.** (BUNDESARCHIV, BILD 101I-590-2333-13/APPE[ARPPE]/CC-BY-SA)

ammunition for beating off assaults at close-quarters. This gave the Germans the opportunity to move around more freely and encouraged them into believing that the paratroopers' ability to resist was weakening, which in material terms, if not in terms of morale, was correct.

Any movement by the paratroopers was, by contrast, severely limited. They could not move from one building to the next without drawing enemy fire. Even at night the burning buildings lit up the bridge, so that there was no real darkness to help conceal their moves. The men were effectively locked up in their respective buildings. Frost, though, still expected to only have to hold out a little longer as the leading elements of XXX Corps were due to arrive the next day.

### XXX CORPS

With the 1st Parachute Brigade in considerable difficulty, it was vital that XXX Corps reached Arnhem quickly. Montgomery had told them to "drive ahead with the utmost energy; any tendency to be sticky or cautious must be stamped out ruthlessly".

The Guards Armoured Division had not left Valkenswaard at first light due to a heavy mist which blanketed the wooded terrain and, despite Montgomery's warning, when the cavalry did move off it was slowly and cautiously. The stiff fighting the Guards had experienced the previous day had shown the need for infantry support and so the 50th (Northumbrian) Division was hurried forward.

Nevertheless, the leading units made contact with the US 101st Airborne Division at the outskirts of Eindhoven, leaving the 50th Division to mop up the remaining enemy positions behind them and to ensure the integrity of the Meuse-Escaut Canal bridgehead. They learnt, though, that the Son Bridge had been destroyed in the face of the men of the 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment (commanded by Colonel Robert Sink) and that the Germans were still in position in the northern suburbs of Eindhoven. Soon, though, news was to reach XXX Corps that the Germans had pulled out of Eindhoven.

The citizens of Eindhoven came out in their thousands to welcome the liberating forces. The cheering and waving crowds blocked the road just as effectively as the enemy had. It took four hours for the first of the 20,000 British vehicles to push their way through the throng. It was not until 19.00 hours that the advance units reached the Son Bridge where Colonel Sink's engineers were busily repairing the broken span. Already General Horrocks' corps was a day behind schedule but until the bridge was repaired there was nothing he could do.

ABOVE: **When the men of the 4th Parachute Brigade jumped shortly after 14.00 hours on the 18th, Ginkelse Heide (or Ginkel Heath) was under attack from German troops. This still from a German newsreel may well show elements of *Kampfgruppe* von Tettau on Amsterdamseweg firing into the descending paratroopers. Led by *Generalleutnant* Hans von Tettau, this battle group was formed in response to the Airborne landings, attacking the 1st Airborne's positions at Oosterbeek from the west.** (CRITICAL PAST)

### SECOND ARMY OPERATIONS

Further operations were also conducted by the Second Army to widen its grip on the Meuse-Escaut Canal. By the morning of the 18th, XII Corps had forced a new bridgehead near Lommel and during the day continued to reinforce its position, whilst the 15th Division and 53rd (Welsh) Division pushed on towards the west of Eindhoven.

On the right flank, VIII Corps planned

BELOW: **At about 13.00 hours on 18 September 1944, Sergeant Dennis Smith of the Army Film and Photographic Unit took this picture of a Vickers Medium Machine-Gun crew, possibly from the 2nd South Staffords, training their gun "on a house holding snipers". The building in question was one of those overlooking Utrechtseweg at the western end of Oosterbeek.** (HMP)

ABOVE: **US airborne personnel collect supplies of ammunition from a XXX Corps resupply point during the advance on Arnhem.** (US NATIONAL ARCHIVES)

to force a crossing of the canal with the 3rd Division after midnight on the 18th in the vicinity of Lille St Hubert. At the same time, the 11th Armoured Division, known as "The Black Bull Division", would press forwards to the area east of Eindhoven.[3]

## THE SECOND AIRLIFT

Delays were also experienced back in the United Kingdom. Even though the weather in Holland was fine, dense cloud over England put back the departure of the aircraft from just after 07.00 hours to 11.20 hours. A couple of hours later, 123 C-47s and the C-53s were over Arnhem, followed in the second wave by 296 aircraft towing 281 Horsas and fifteen Hamilcars. Between them the aircraft and gliders of the 314th and 315th US Troop Carrier Groups transported 2,119 men of the British 4th Parachute Brigade, consisting of the 10th, 11th and 156th Parachute Battalions, plus the balance of the 1st Airborne Division's guns and vehicles and the remainder of the 1st Airlanding Brigade. The transports were also carrying fifty-one tons of supplies to drop on Drop Zone Y at Ginkel Heath.

This Drop Zone was on an enormous expanse of heathland north of the Arnhem to Ede road. It was defended by the 7th Battalion of the King's Own Scottish Borderers. Led by Lieutenant Colonel Robert Payton-Reid, the 7th KOSB moved onto the heath which appeared to be clear of the enemy. A wood backed onto the heath and Payton-Reid decided to send an officer and sergeant-major to reconnoitre it. Shortly he heard the crack of rifles and the sergeant-major ran back to report that "The place is full of 'em, sir!"

The KOSB kept the enemy at bay during the morning, but German garrisons still holding out on the Channel coast had been warned to look out for a second airlift. They soon notified *Generalfeldmarschall* Model that more Allied aircraft were on the way.

Making an assumption as to where the British troops would land, more German troops and anti-aircraft guns were moved to where they could bring their weapons to bear on Ginkel Heath. The result was that the drop that day saw far greater casualties than the first airlift. Twenty-four of the US aircraft were damaged by enemy fire and six were lost in the first wave. In the second wave heavy anti-aircraft fire over Holland resulted in thirty of the tugs and several gliders being damaged, with one tug being shot down, the glider released and came down near Arnhem. Nine other gliders broke their tow ropes before reaching the Continent.[4]

"About 1.30 the second lift came in," remembered Lieutenant Peter Baille who had landed on the first day. "What a sight that was. I doubt if any of us will see such an incredible sight ever again. The total aircraft in the air at that time, including fighters, bombers etc, was over 2,000! The sky was black with gliders, tugs, parachutes, fighters, bombers. Parachutes were dropping everywhere. How could any German stop and fight all this we thought, little knowing what a tough and disastrous time we had ahead of us. In just over 2 hours the whole area was clear and all that was left was broken gliders and discarded parachutes."[5]

Amongst those parachutists was Private H. Boardman of the 156th ▷▷

BELOW LEFT: **Corporal Ron Mills of 181st Field Ambulance pictured in silent contemplation at the grave of Trooper William Edmond of 9 Section, 'C' Troop, 1st Airborne Reconnaissance Squadron, on 18 September 1944. Edmond was one of the men wounded in the ambush on the 17th, shot as he got up to attempt a last dash for safety. With a sucking wound in his back, Edmond managed a few words with Sergeant David Christie who had been instrumental in rescuing him under fire: "Jock, I'm dying. Tell my wife I love her and go and see her for me." Evacuated to the dressing station that had been established near Wolfheze station, Trooper Edmond died the following morning.** (HMP)

Parachute Battalion: "We flew three abreast and as we came close to Nijmegen, the guns started firing at us again. The 'plane on our left was hit, and it went down. All the men were good old friends of mine, it was the Machine-Gun Platoon, and they all died before they had a chance to fire a shot in the battle.

"We flew on for another five minutes and were dropped over the Ginkelse Heide. I was number 17 in my 'plane. Somebody hesitated earlier on in the 'plane and the result was that the last one out, Sergeant Bill Wasley, finished up landing in the trees and was killed there. I finished about three hundred yards from where I had hoped to land, and as I was coming down I could hear the bullets. They missed me, thank God. After I landed I made my way to the assembly point."[6]

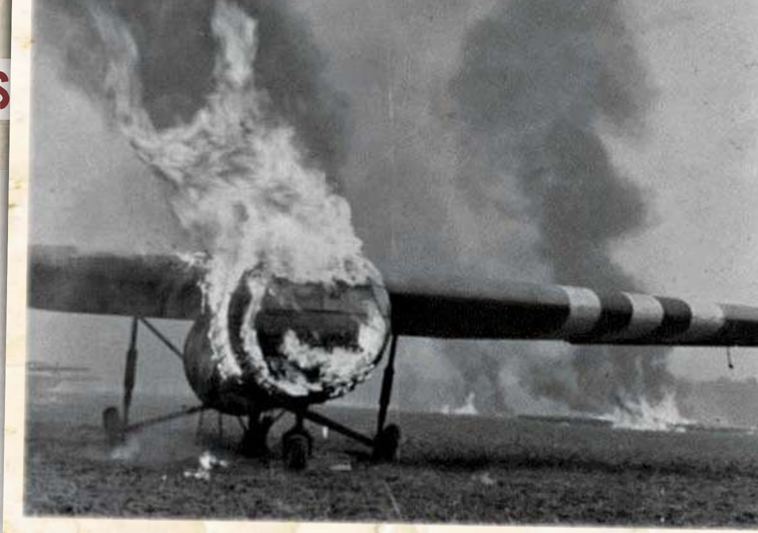
Lieutenant James Blackwood, CO of No.6 Platoon, 'B' Company, 11th Parachute Battalion, jumped from his C-47 at 14.10 hours. He made a soft landing despite bullet holes in his parachute from a German machine-gun: "The ground was covered with hundreds of parachutes; hundreds more were coming down; waves of 'planes were sweeping in. Nor was the DZ a healthy place in which to linger. The German was ensconced in the woods which bordered the DZ on two sides and was lacing the place with machine-gun and mortar fire. Men were coming down dead in the harness and others were hit before they could extricate themselves."[7]

Corporal Fred Jenkins of the 10th Parachute Battalion also came under fire: "There was smoke all around me and about five machine-guns firing; they all sounded like German Spandaus – too sharp to be ours. Everything seemed to be chaotic – a whole brigade moving off to about four different rendezvous points, but I couldn't see anybody I knew.

"The bullets didn't seem to be coming my way, and anyway I couldn't crawl off the DZ, so I just pushed along in a crouching run as fast as I could. I saw a 'chute in flames and went to see if anyone was on it. There wasn't anybody there, but just then the heat proved too strong and fierce for the safety of a mortar bomb which was lying nearby. It exploded, and I ducked, damn quick. Lucky as usual. The man next to me shouted. I went along and found he'd had his nose blown off. I eased his equipment off and put a dressing on the wound. He could still talk and walk, so I dragged him along with me – had to hustle because there were more mortar bombs lying about and they looked well toasted. My charge was a sergeant-major from 11th Battalion, and I handed him over as soon as I could."[8]

One aircraft with sixteen paratroopers on board was hit and burst into flames, but every man was able to jump out in time. Other paratroopers, as we have seen, were lost to enemy; nevertheless something under 1,900 men landed safely in the space of just nine minutes.

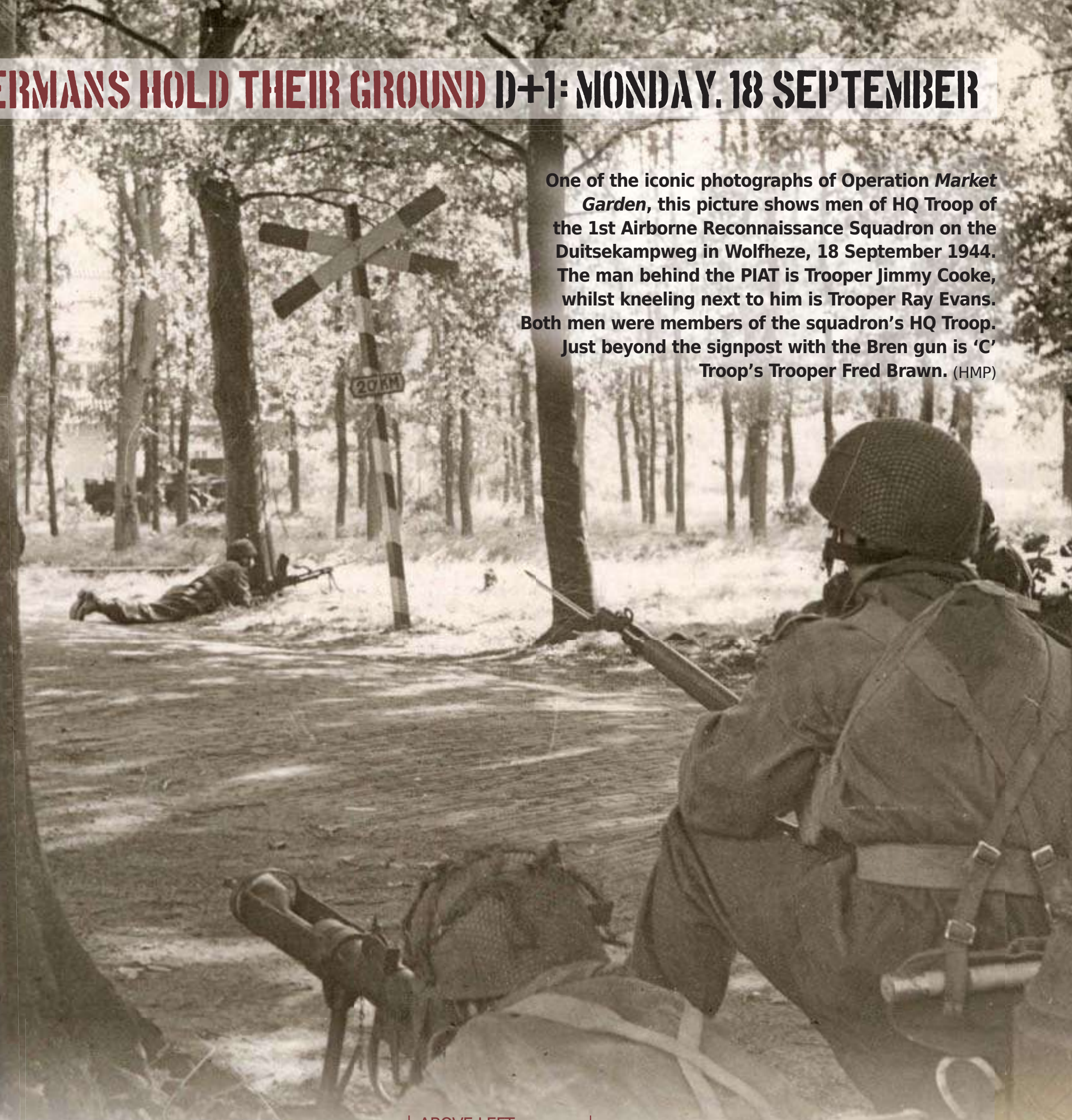
As well as combat troops, glider-borne men of the Royal Army Service



ABOVE: **During the morning of the 18th, a number of the gliders on LZ 'X' were strafed by *Luftwaffe* fighters. This shot of a burning glider on the same LZ was, however, photographed by a German *Kriegsberichter* when the area was recaptured soon after and the enemy troops set fire to many of the Horsas.** (BUNDESARCHIV, BILD 183-J27850/CC-BY-SA)

LEFT: **Two of the Army Film and Photographic Unit cameramen at Arnhem, Sergeant Mike Lewis (middle) and Sergeant Gordon Walker (on the right), share a quick meal with a local resident at Oosterbeek, 18 September 1944.** (HMP)

BELOW: **German reinforcements crossing the Rhine. The absence of a ferry suggests that this may well be the stretch of the Rhine near Huissen.** (BUNDESARCHIV, BILD 183-S73821/CC-BY-SA)



**One of the iconic photographs of Operation *Market Garden*, this picture shows men of HQ Troop of the 1st Airborne Reconnaissance Squadron on the Duitsekampweg in Wolfheze, 18 September 1944. The man behind the PIAT is Trooper Jimmy Cooke, whilst kneeling next to him is Trooper Ray Evans. Both men were members of the squadron's HQ Troop. Just beyond the signpost with the Bren gun is 'C' Troop's Trooper Fred Brawn.** (HMP)

Corps were landed along with thirty-four jeeps and sixty-eight trailers at landing zones 'S' and 'X'. These men and machines were vital for the transportation of supplies, which would be dropped over the course of the next few days, from the drop zones to the troops in Arnhem.

ABOVE LEFT: **Pictured by a German *Propaganda-kompanie*, or PK, photographer, these are some of the many supply panniers dropped on the 18th that fell into enemy hands.** (BUNDESARCHIV, BILD 101II-M2KBK-772-04/ HÖPPNER/CC-BY-SA)

The two US divisions were also reinforced. The 82nd received 1,782 artillery men with 177 jeeps and sixty guns, with the 101st welcomed a further 2,656 troops and vehicles.

## THE 4TH PARACHUTE BRIGADE ADVANCES

Back at the bridge Major Frost knew that he could not hold on indefinitely and he urgently needed the support rest of the 1st Brigade. So to try and help the 3rd Battalion, he sent some of his men out in a bid to take the Germans in the town in the rear. The German armour, though, was out in force in Arnhem and the plan came to nothing.

Frost's force at the end of the bridge came under attack again in the afternoon when the Germans tried to get into the British position from the east along the river bank. They were driven off by a furious bayonet charge. Yet now, with the second air lift complete, Frost must have hoped that the rest of the division would be strong enough to force its way through.

The original plan had been that the 4th Parachute Brigade would move to the right of the Airlanding Brigade to defend the high ground to the north of Arnhem. All that had now changed and Brigadier Shan Hackett had no choice but to see if he could reach the bridge as quickly as possible in the hope that Frost's men could hang on until they arrived.

By the time the 4th Brigade was on the move from the Drop Zone it was 17.00 hours. After three hours of marching, having covered around six miles, it came up against the German blocking positions which had been organised, by SS-*Sturmbannführer* Ludwig Spindler, in the area of the road leading north from Oosterbeek known as the Dreijenseweg.

Major Geoffrey Powell of 'C' Company, 156th Parachute Battalion, which was leading the 4th Brigade's advance, encountered an officer of the Airlanding Brigade who told them that the German positions were ahead – but the enemy was well concealed and its exact location could not be seen. The battalion could not just blunder into the German position, so a single platoon would have to go forward to draw the enemy fire, forcing them to reveal themselves. This job was handed to Leslie Doyle's (a pseudonym) 9 Platoon.

"He and his men had to walk straight down the track until they ran into the Boche position," recalled Powell when writing under the pseudonym of Tom Angus. "Their first warning of the enemy's presence would be the rifle and machine-gun fire tearing into them. Still less were the two scouts to be envied who would be moving out in front of the rest of the platoon. It was almost inevitable that the first German rounds would hit one or more of them, unless the Germans were cunning enough to let them pass so as to kill more of the men behind. But with no armour in front to draw the enemy's fire and pin-point their positions, there was no other way to advance …

"As the men of 9 Platoon probed cautiously forward, the rest of the column moved in a series of jerks … The expected happened. The calm of the night collapsed in an explosion of light and noise.

"From a wide arc in front of 9 Platoon, streams of white, red and yellow tracer bullets converged on the stretch of track where the men must have flung themselves to the

▷▷

BELOW: **Captured British airborne personnel on one of the landing zones at Arnhem. It is possible that this is LZ 'X' after the Germans had started regaining possession of it.** (CRITICAL PAST) ground. Verey lights and parachute flares, larger and brighter than anything carried by us, swung down towards the earth, lighting the dark countryside to the shade of a grey November morning.

"A house burst into flames on the other side of the railway. It was too sudden for an accident; the conflagration must have been planned. Anything which moved was now visible. Over all was the noise: the din of shells and mortars, bursting both behind and ahead, merging with the harsh roar of the enemy Spandau light machine-guns and the more sustained drumming of the heavier weapons. Now I could hear another sound. It was the slow rat-a-tat-tat of 9 Platoon's Bren guns and the crack of British rifles replying to the German fire."[9]

The men of 9 Platoon were pinned down, with their commander badly wounded and barely conscious. Every effort by the rest of 'C' Company to probe the German positions met a similar fate. All that the company achieved for the loss of thirteen men was to confirm what they had already been told – that the enemy was holding Dreijenseweg with large numbers.

Attempts to outflank the Germans only made it plain that the enemy was there in strength and that nothing except further casualties would be gained by attempting to force the enemy line. The company was withdrawn into a defensive position for the night with the intention that 156 Battalion would push forward again at daylight. In fact so well executed were Spindler's plans that the defensive perimeter his *Kampfgruppe* held was not breached by the British forces throughout the battle at Arnhem.

## AIRLANDING BRIGADE

After having held the south of Ginkel Heath during the drop by the 4th Brigade, the Airlanding Brigade's 7th KOSB was supposed to move onto Landing Zone 'L' in anticipation of the arrival of the gliders carrying the heavy equipment of the Polish Parachute Brigade the next day. The battalion's 'B' Company led the way.

ABOVE LEFT: **Men of 'D' Company, 1st Battalion the Border Regiment with German prisoners of war in the garden of a private dwelling. It is believed that this shot was taken by Sergeant Lewis of the AFPU on 18 September 1944.** (HMP)

"We came under heavy and close range fire in complete darkness," reported Major Michael Forman, 'B' Company's CO. "The grounds on the left of the track and in front of us were open and we deployed to the right side of the track. Further Spandau and 20mm machine-gun fire came from the Dreijenseweg in front of us. We were pinned down in a fierce firefight which must have lasted three-quarters of an hour in a sea of brushwood from recently felled pine trees. We were then ordered … to withdraw to Johannahoeve Farm, which we did under uncomfortable fire … Corporal McCleary stayed to the last to cover our withdrawal with a Bren gun and we ran back together encouraged by 20mm tracer bullets."[10]

## SUPPLY DROP

Thirty-five Stirlings of Bomber Command's 38 Group from RAF Harwell arrived over Arnhem at around 15.00 hours to deliver supplies of all kinds to the airborne troops. The Drop Zone – DZ 'L', an open space in the woods north-west of Oosterbeek – was partly held by the enemy and the Germans were waiting as they knew exactly where the drop was going to take place. They knew this because of an extraordinary piece of good luck on their part.

"Two hours after the air armada first appeared in the skies over Holland, the Allied operation order for *Market Garden* was on my desk," explained *Generaloberst* Kurt Student. "It had been captured from a glider forced down near Vught – which was my command post. It was the same as in 1940 during

TOP RIGHT: **Four prisoners from *Kampfgruppe* Krafft photographed shortly before being handed over to the Military Police. They were captured during an ill-fated German attempt to breach the British defences around Arnhem Bridge on the morning of Monday, 18 September 1944. The three guards in the background are members of No.16 Flight, F Squadron, Glider Pilot Regiment. They are, from left to right: Staff Sergeant Joe Kitchener, Staff Sergeant "Duffy" Edwards, and Staff Sergeant George Milburn.** (HMP)

BELOW: **German reinforcements on the move, in this case bicycle-mounted infantry arriving at the Huissen ferry crossing on the Rhine south-east of Arnhem. Though the ferry itself had been scuttled by the Dutch, enemy troops used various make-shift or improvised rafts and craft, including rubber boats, to begin crossing in order to attack Arnhem and/or defend Nijmegen. They also used the surviving ferry at the nearby village of Pannderden. The first units to reach Nijmegen by this route did so on the morning of 18 September.** (BUNDESARCHIV, BILD 183-S73824/CC-BY-SA)

LEFT: **Captain James Ogilvie, second in command of 'D' Squadron of the Glider Pilot Regiment (who landed in his kilt) standing beside a Jeep with a patrol, 18 September 1944. The location is the Utrechtseweg opposite the junction with Bredeweg. Of interest is the fact that further down the road in the trees on the left is a 17-pounder gun of the 1st Airlanding Anti-Tank Battery RA.** (HMP)

ABOVE: **A Short Stirling is pictured returning to the UK after a resupply mission over Arnhem. This is the aircraft, Stirling Mk.IV LK171, which was flown by RAF Harwell's Station Commander, Group Captain Bill Surplice. Note that Surplice has had his initials painted on the aircraft. The location of the pannier hatch at the bottom of the rear of the fuselage can also be distinguished.** (K.A. MERRICK)

the 1st Airborne operation in Holland, when a German officer, despite the strictest injunctions, carried the operational order on his person. It fell into Allied hands, and enabled the Allies to conduct a thorough study of German parachute tactics, which was the main reason for the heavy German parachute losses in Crete."

The details of the plan for *Market Garden* were passed onto Model – though the reality was that it was not the full details of the operation that had been captured, only the operational orders for the US 101st Airborne which opened with an outline of *Market Garden*. The Germans could now anticipate many of the Allied forces' moves.

The supply aircraft in particular suffered, with many being hit by anti-aircraft fire. Two were shot down and fourteen others badly damaged. With the exception of two of the Stirlings, all the pilots believed that they had made accurate drops from heights of around 500 feet. In reality many of the 803 panniers and containers were widely scattered. The net weight of supplies that had been despatched was eighty-seven tons. Only twelve tons reached the beleaguered British troops.

## AT THE END OF THE DAY

At around midnight Brigadier Hackett met Brigadier Hicks at the Hartenstein Hotel in Oosterbeek where the 1st Airborne Divisional Headquarters had been set up. Hicks explained the situation to Hackett. "Each battalion was now fighting individually to reach the bridge and, although instructed to follow specific routes, battalions had been warned that due to the unusual conditions some overlapping might occur." The various battalions were scattered and fighting with no coordination and little idea of one another's whereabouts. Lacking effective communications, pinned down in built-up areas, many units came upon each quite by chance.[11]

In reality the 7th KOSB, like the 156th Parachute Battalion, had been repelled by Spindler's blocking line and had, similarly, pulled back into a defensive perimeter. The 10th Parachute Battalion had settled down near Hackett's brigade HQ east of Wolfheze. Further south the 2nd South Staffs had actually managed to join the 1st Parachute Battalion near the St Elizabeth's Hospital at around 20.00 hours, and the 11th Parachute Battalion arrived there sometime around midnight. Lieutenant Colonel David Dobie of the 1st Battalion assumed command of this combined force.

Across the river the Germans had brought up anti-aircraft guns and artillery to shell the British positions on the north bank of the Lower Rhine. Enemy armoured vehicles and *Nebelwerfer* multi-barrelled rocket launchers soon joined in the bombardment and "starting from the rooftops, buildings collapsed like doll's houses", remarked an SS soldier.

Frost's hold on the bridge was also becoming less secure. The latest German attack had been beaten back but the 2nd Battalion's eastern perimeter had been driven in and some of the positions won earlier had to be abandoned. With each enemy attack Frost lost yet more men and expended more ammunition.

Very bad though the situation clearly was, it was going to get steadily worse. Hitler had demanded that Model's troops should receive all possible assistance and *Generalfeldmarschall* von Rundstedt, the commander of all German forces in the west, had already set in motion the movement of troops from all across his command area.

Unaware of the weight of the German forces that were bearing down upon Arnhem and the corridor through which XXX Corps was travelling, hopes in the Hartenstein Hotel at this stage were still reasonably high. The Polish Brigade would arrive the next day and Horrock's tanks must soon be approaching.

Lieutenant Colonel Dobie, though, was not going to wait. With his combined force he was determined to make one more effort to break through to the bridge. The attack was timed for 04.00 hours on D+3, 19 September. As chance would have it the 3rd Battalion, unaware of Dobie's intentions, also intended to attack at the same time on the same axis. The stage was set for the last great attempt to reach Arnhem's road bridge.

## NOTES

1. The correct name for the hospital is St Elisabeth, though it is more commonly referred to by English speakers as the St Elisabeth's Hospital.
2. Frost, *op. cit.*, p.220.
3. Field Marshal Montgomery, *Normandy to the Baltic* (Arrow Books, London, 1961), p.141.
4. Alan Wood, *The Glider Soldiers*, (Spellmount, Tunbridge Wells,, 1992), p.303.
5. Richard J. Aldrich, *op. cit.*, p.563.
6. Van Teeseling, *op. cit.*, p.61.
7. Martin Bowman, *So Near And Yet So Far* (Pen & Sword, Barnsley, 2013), p.69.
8. Middlebrook, *op. cit.*, p.237.
9. Tom Angus, *Men at Arnhem* (Leo Cooper, London, 1977), pp.42-3.
10. Frank Steer, *Arnhem, The Landing Grounds and Oosterbeek* (Pen & Sword, Barnsley, 2009), p.74.
11. Cornelius Ryan, *op. cit.*, pp.339-40.

# D+2 TUESDAY, 19 SEPTEMBER

# "WHERE ARE THE POLES?"

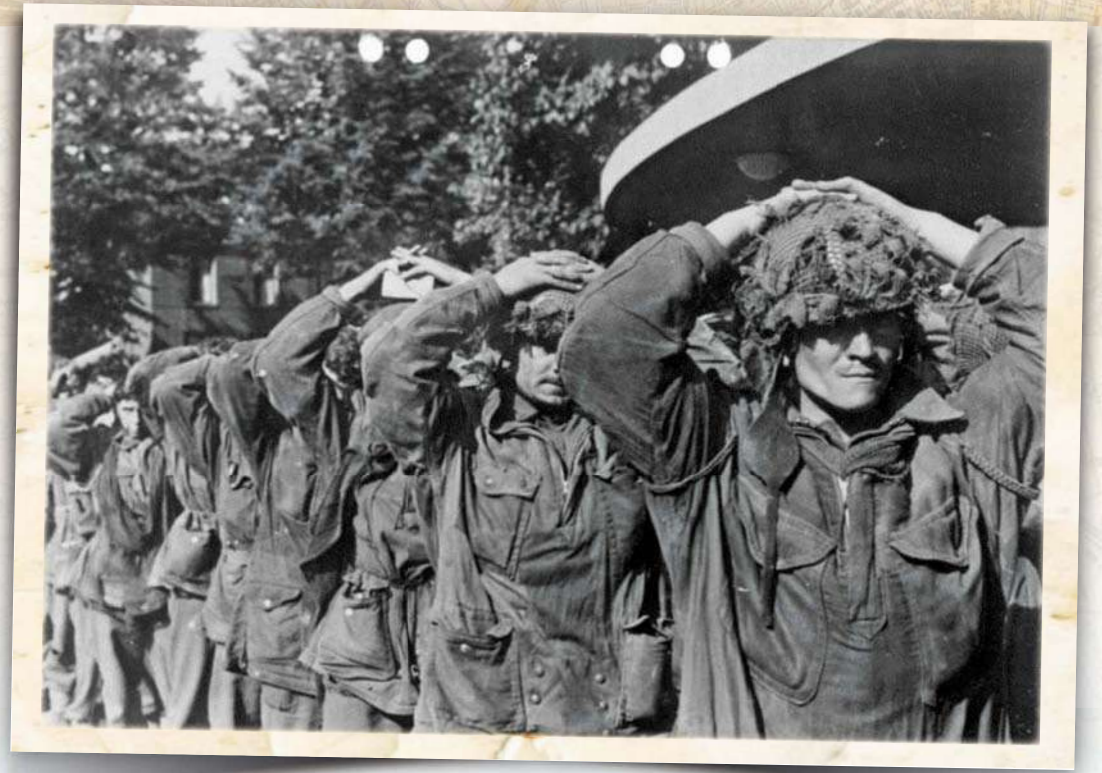
**More supplies were expected to be dropped to the increasingly beleaguered men of the 1st Airborne Division, as were reinforcements in the form of the Polish Parachute Brigade. It would, though, be a day of disappointments.**

**IT WAS just before 04.00 hours when the 3rd Parachute Battalion made its last effort to break through the German line. As they moved eastwards the paratroopers found that SS-*Sturmbannführer* Spindler had withdrawn his forces a few hundred yards to high ground nearer the river in front of which was an area of open ground. This allowed Major General Urquhart to escape from the attic where he had been trapped and he made his way to the Divisional HQ in the Hartenstein Hotel.**

As soon as Urquhart was briefed on the current situation he realized that the two drops planned for the day, upon which so much depended, needed to be changed as the intended drop zones were not under British control. He tried to warn Airborne Army HQ but the message did not get through.

Urquhart might have escaped at last, but the 3rd Parachute Battalion had walked into trouble. As it crossed the open ground the Germans opened

MAIN PICTURE: **After the herculean night-time efforts of the men of 14th Field Squadron Royal Engineers, the Bailey Bridge over the Wilhelmina Canal at Son was completed. At last XXX Corps could push on. Here, following the scout cars which were first over, a Sherman of the 2nd Armoured Battalion Grenadier Guards crosses at 06.45 hours.** (US NATIONAL ARCHIVES)



ABOVE: **Slowly but surely, as *Market Garden* progressed more and more members of the British Airborne Forces at Arnhem found themselves taken prisoner. Here a large group is pictured in front of Arnhem station on the 19th.** (BUNDESARCHIV, BILD 146-2005-0077/WENZEL, ERICH/CC-BY-SA)

fire. At the same time German anti-aircraft and 88mm guns from across the Rhine shelled the exposed attackers. Lieutenant Colonel Fitch called off the attack and withdrew.

As the 1st Battalion made its move towards the bridge it encountered only light sniping from the high ground on its flank. Soon, however, the long column of paratroopers came under the barrage from across the river and fire poured in on the 1st Battalion from both sides. Lieutenant Colonel Dobie went forward to assess the situation for himself and found that his badly mauled 'T' Company was cut off and could not disengage from the enemy. The men needed to find cover and Dobie helped them drive a number of SS troopers from a house where they took shelter. Dobie was hit in the eye and arm during the struggle and when he looked round he found only six men of the Company were left.[1]

The South Staffs followed by the 11th Parachute Battalion attacked the German positions at dawn along

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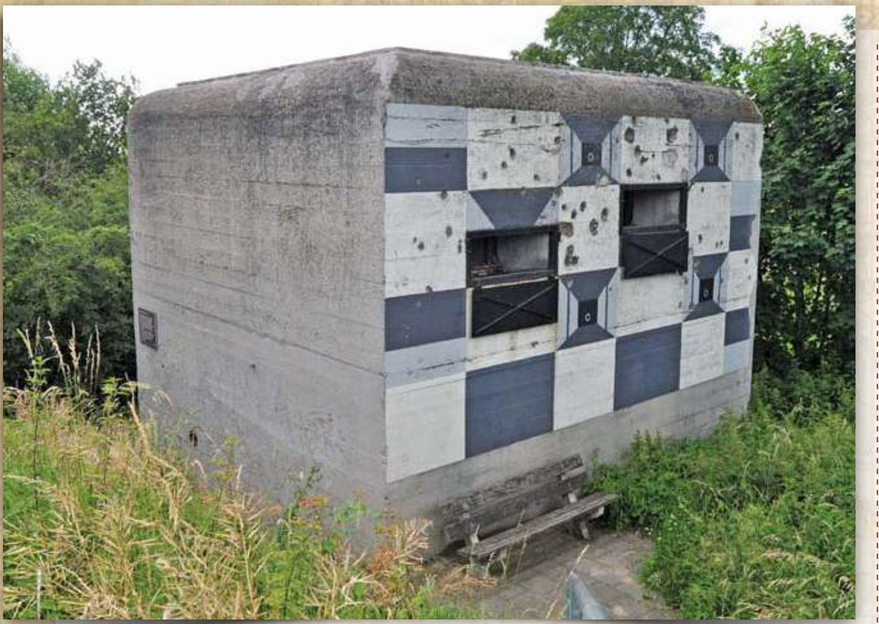


LEFT: **This pre-war Dutch bunker on the south side of the Maas bridge at Grave, just beside a bend in the approach road, was attacked by Lieutenant Thompson's men on 17 September. Indeed, a 2cm anti-aircraft gun on the roof, which had been firing throughout, was knocked out by a bazooka round. When the US troops entered the blockhouse they cut wires which it was suspected led to detonation charges on the bridge. Like the pillbox a short distance away, evidence of the fighting can still be seen on its walls.** (COURTESY OF MARK KHAN)

the road to Arnhem. 'A', 'B', and 'D' companies of the South Staffs reached the St Elizabeth Hospital at 05.00 hours but had by then taken forty per cent casualties. There the battalion halted as the 11th Battalion moved up to support it. At 08.00 hours the Germans launched a heavy counter-attack. The South Staffs were forced to withdraw to the hospital whilst the 11th Battalion held off the enemy. Then an attack led by tanks overran the 2nd Battalion the South Staffordshire Regiment's position. Its CO, Lieutenant Colonel Derek McCardie, and his second in command, Major J.C. Cummings, were wounded and taken prisoner.

## THE 4TH PARACHUTE BRIGADE

The 156th Parachute Battalion began its attack on the German lines at 07.00 hours. 'A' and 'B' companies ran into heavy machine-gun fire in the woods outside Oosterbeek and 'C' Company was bombarded by mortars. The men were ordered to dig in but losses had been heavy, particularly amongst 'A' and 'B' companies as they had walked into well-concealed German positions and had been cut down in the open.

"We had little time to dig in before the first counter-attack came in," reported Major John Pott, commanding 'A' Company, "but we held our fire till they were close and we cheered as they ran back shouting. We were out of ammunition when the second attack came in, so we laid low till they were very close and then tried to charge into the flank of their assault line, but a bullet through my femur felled me and that was 'A' Company's last effort."[2] Pott was taken to hospital in Arnhem by Dutch helpers but not until after he had remained lying on the ground for eighteen hours.

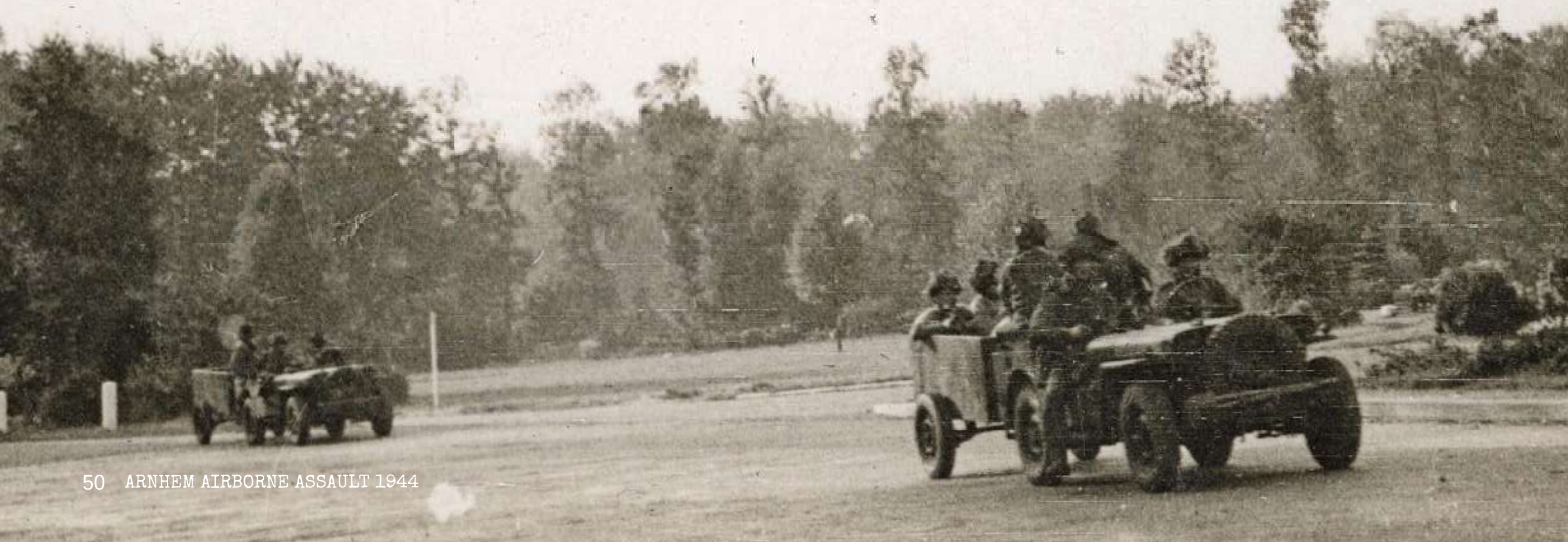
The 10th Parachute Battalion had been ordered to move to a road junction on the Amsterdamseweg and there "occupy a firm base". Having reached that point, rather than holding a firm base the 10th pushed on and bumped right into the German blocking line on the Dreijenseweg. The leading element – 'D' Company – came under heavy machine-gun fire, mortars, and from armoured vehicles. Unable to advance, they too had little choice but to dig in. "We were in shallow scrapes on the edge of a wood about fifty to seventy-five yards from the Germans," explained Private George Taylor of 'D' Company and who was No.2 on a Bren gun.

When a column of German armoured vehicles was then seen approaching, Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth Smyth, the 10th Battalion's CO, planned to ambush them, though his men had only their personal weapons and mortars. The Germans, however, stopped short of the battalion's location and poured fire into the paratroopers. An attempt by 'A' Company to outflank the Germans came to nothing

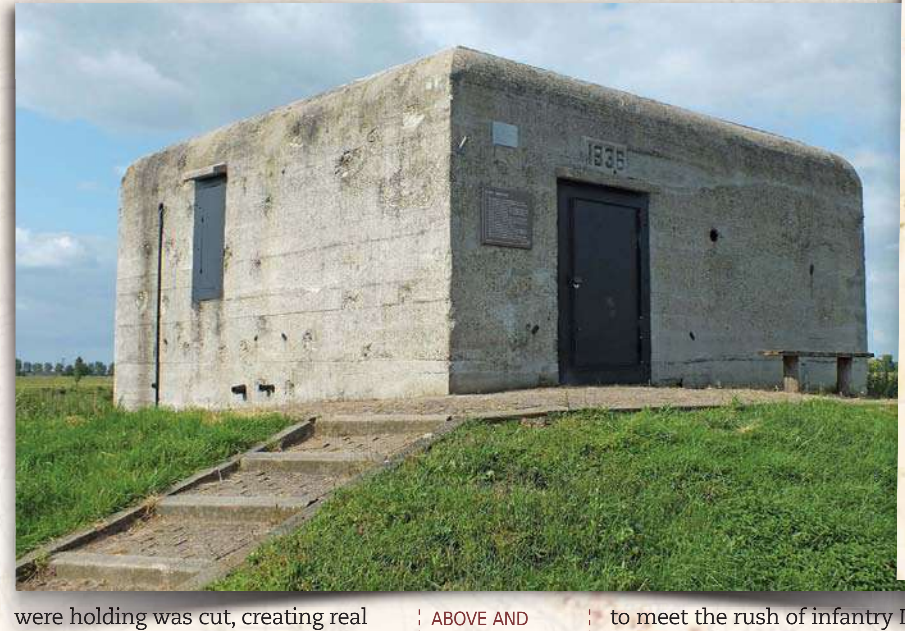
Having failed to break through the German positions, suffering heavy casualties in the process, Brigadier Hackett ordered his brigade to disengage and withdraw towards Oosterbeek. It fell to the 10th Battalion to hold off the enemy.

## ON THE BRIDGE

With the rest of the division pinned down the situation of the 2nd Parachute Battalion on the Arnhem road bridge was becoming critical. The water supply to the buildings they



BELOW: **Jeeps of No.2 Platoon, 250 Airborne Light Composite Company RASC heading off to collect supplies from the drop zones, drive along Utrechtseweg, in front of the Hartenstein Hotel, on 19 September 1944. Note the pannier dropping. On the right of the open ground is the RASC Divisional Maintenance Area.** (HMP)



ABOVE AND ABOVE LEFT: **One of the original Dutch defences built to defend the Maas bridge at Grave. Constructed in 1936, this pillbox still bears the scars of the fighting in this area during the Second World War.** (COURTESY OF MARK KHAN)

TOP RIGHT: **A group of British PoWs pictured sitting in the doorway of what is now No.70 Utrechtseweg in Arnhem.** (BUNDESARCHIV, BILD 183-J27785/ CC-BY-SA)

were holding was cut, creating real concern for the wounded men.

During the day the Germans sent back one of the Royal Engineers they had captured earlier with a message to Frost from the enemy commander. The message was that it was pointless for the 2nd Battalion to keep on fighting with no hope of being relieved and that Frost should meet with him to discuss their terms of surrender. However, the sapper said that the Germans were disheartened with their heavy losses and this inspired Frost to fight on.

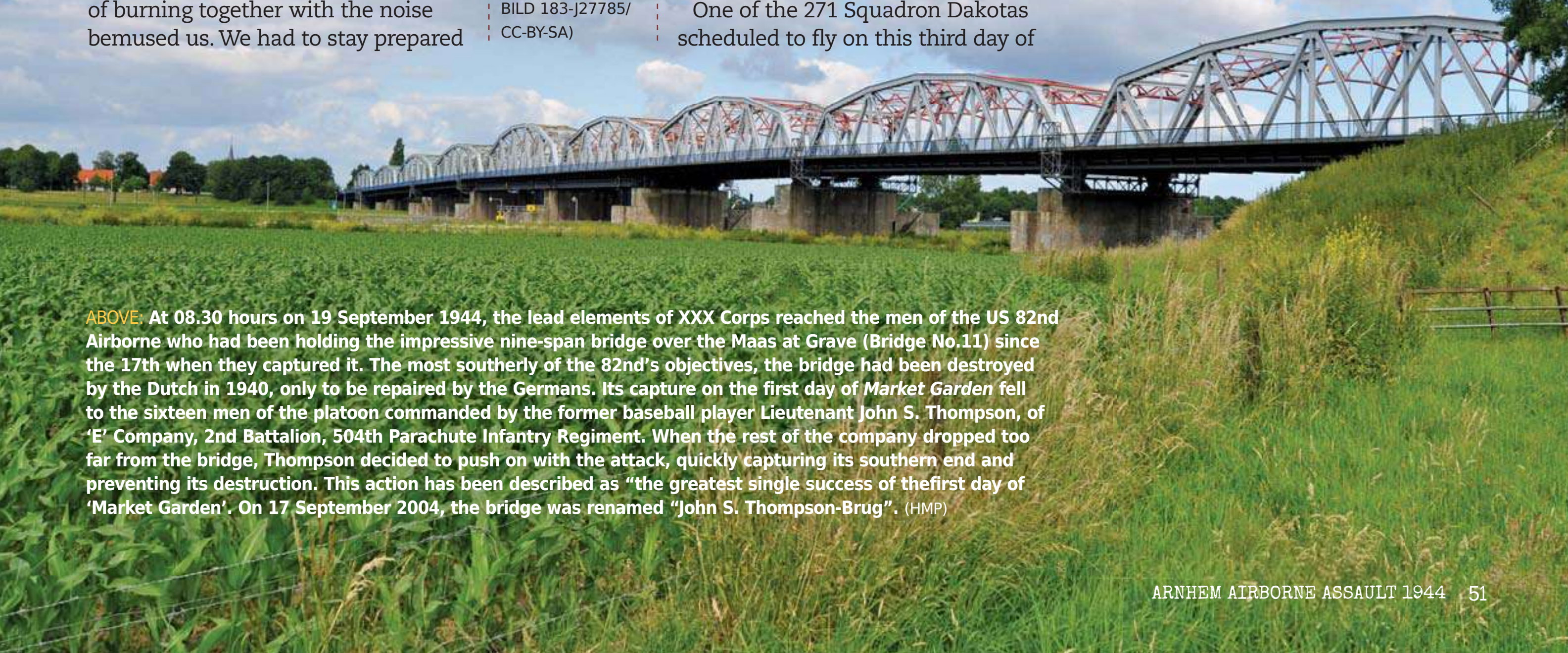
When there was no response from Frost the Germans renewed their assault. “New weapons came to harry us and all the buildings by the bridge were on fire,” Frost wrote. “Towards evening heavy tanks appeared, incredibly menacing and sinister in the half-light, as their guns swung from target to target. Shells burst through our walls. The dust and settling debris following their explosions filled the passages and rooms. The acrid reek and smell of burning together with the noise bemused us. We had to stay prepared to meet the rush of infantry I knew would follow if we wavered for a moment.”[3] Frost’s other concern was that his men were running very low on ammunition. If help did not come soon, they would be unable to hold the Germans back.

## THE THIRD AIR DROP

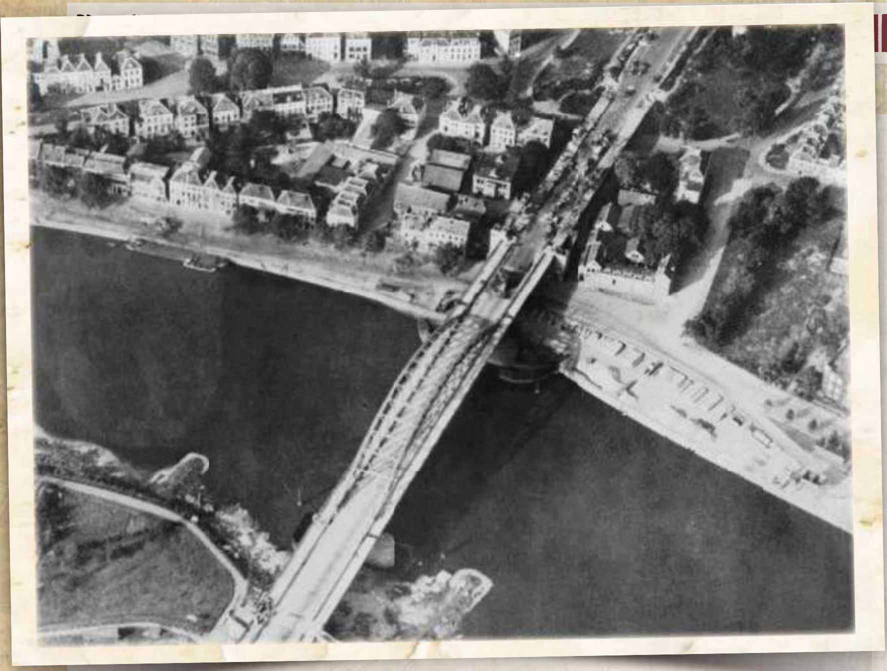
It had been anticipated that after forty-eight hours of fighting the 1st Airborne Division would be running short of vital supplies, especially food and ammunition as only limited amounts were carried by the troops when they landed on the 17th. The briefing given to the air crews that morning called for a maximum supply drop to the almost encircled airborne troops at Arnhem and Oosterbeek. Their task was made all the more difficult when they were told that, due to poor visibility, they might have no fighter escort. Worse still was that they would have to fly over the Drop Zone itself at just 900 feet to ensure accuracy. German air activity and the level of anti-aircraft fire were known to be formidable.

One of the 271 Squadron Dakotas scheduled to fly on this third day of *Market Garden* was KG374. Its crew on that morning waited apprehensively for the fog enveloping southern England to clear. The pilot, who had joined 271 Squadron at Doncaster on 29 January 1944, was Flight Lieutenant David Lord. At 33, Lord was older than most pilots in Fighter Command or Bomber Command.

Lord’s regular navigator Doug MacDonell had been given leave to get married, so he asked his friend Harry King to take MacDonell’s place on the re-supply run. The rest of this Dakota’s crew consisted of Pilot Officer Richard “Dickie” Medhurst, the Second Pilot, and Flying Officer Alexander “Alec” Ballantyne, the Wireless Operator. Along with Harry, the three RAF aircrew were joined by four Army personnel. These four men, all Air Despatchers, were from 233 Company (63 Airborne Composite Company) Royal Army Service Corps. They were Corporal Philip Nixon and Drivers Leonard Harper, James Ricketts and Arthur Rowbotham. ▹▹



ABOVE: **At 08.30 hours on 19 September 1944, the lead elements of XXX Corps reached the men of the US 82nd Airborne who had been holding the impressive nine-span bridge over the Maas at Grave (Bridge No.11) since the 17th when they captured it. The most southerly of the 82nd’s objectives, the bridge had been destroyed by the Dutch in 1940, only to be repaired by the Germans. Its capture on the first day of *Market Garden* fell to the sixteen men of the platoon commanded by the former baseball player Lieutenant John S. Thompson, of ‘E’ Company, 2nd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment. When the rest of the company dropped too far from the bridge, Thompson decided to push on with the attack, quickly capturing its southern end and preventing its destruction. This action has been described as “the greatest single success of thefirst day of ‘Market Garden’. On 17 September 2004, the bridge was renamed “John S. Thompson-Brug”.** (HMP)



LEFT: **An aerial view of the road bridge over the Lower Rhine at Arnhem which was taken, it is usually stated, on 19 September 1944. Signs of the British defence on the northern ramp and the wrecked German vehicles from the previous day's fighting can be seen at the north end.** (HMP)

Finally, after waiting all morning for the weather to clear, KG374, together with sixteen other Dakotas, lifted off from RAF Down Ampney a little after 13.10 hours. It was bound for Supply Drop Zone 'V' on the northeast outskirts of Arnhem. The weather, which was bad from the outset, rapidly deteriorated and the thick cloud they had encountered was replaced by a haze as they crossed the Dutch coast.

These conditions presented a navigational problem for King and he was forced to plot the course by means of dead reckoning, aided by the *Gee* navigational aid. Eventually, Lord brought the aircraft down below the level of hazy cloud into clearer, brighter, conditions. Directly below they could see Nijmegen. Ahead lay the Rhine and Arnhem.

## THE GERMANS WERE WAITING

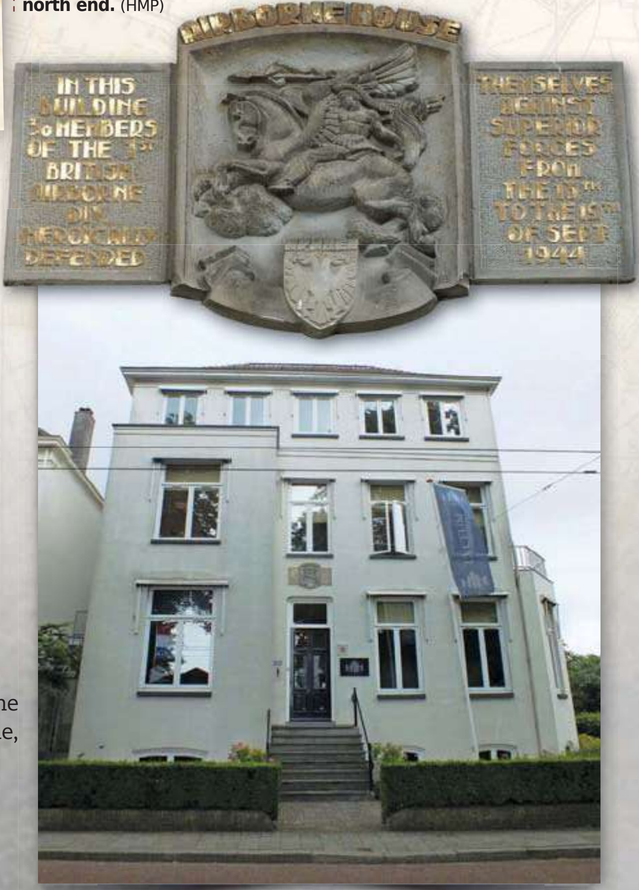
The Germans had captured Supply Drop Zone 'V' during Monday night and, knowing the Allied plans, were waiting with every anti-aircraft gun they could gather. The sixty-three Dakotas and 101 Stirlings were heading for disaster.

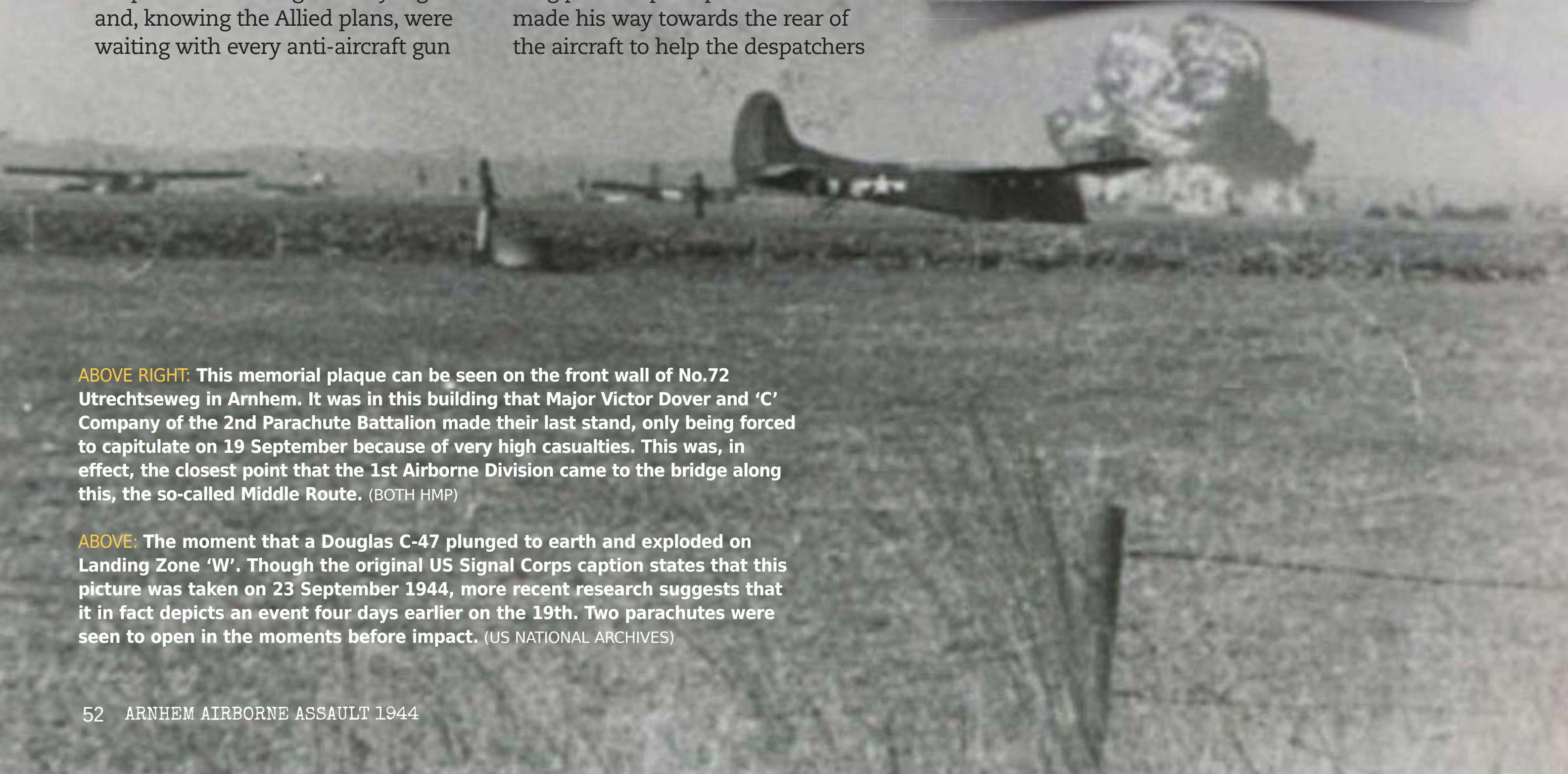
KG374 was now flying at 1,500ft in the mainstream of the supply aircraft. It was about seven miles from Arnhem and approaching from the south. Fierce anti-aircraft fire was starting to envelop her and within a few minutes the aircraft shuddered violently. The Dakota had been hit twice and a trail of smoke appeared, coming from the direction of the starboard engine. This was to quickly ignite into bright flames; KG374 was in trouble.

Lord asked if there were any casualties, but miraculously no-one had been hurt. He then immediately asked King how far they were from the Drop Zone. "Three minutes flying time, Skipper" was the reply. Lord now told his crew that after the canisters had been dropped, they could bale out.

As the 'Going in' order was given, King picked up his parachute and made his way towards the rear of the aircraft to help the despatchers discharge the panniers. Then, using his intercom, he would be able to tell Lord when the last pannier had gone. Seconds later, the aircraft was again hit by flak. The five men waited to push the panniers along the steel rollers and out of the hold door.

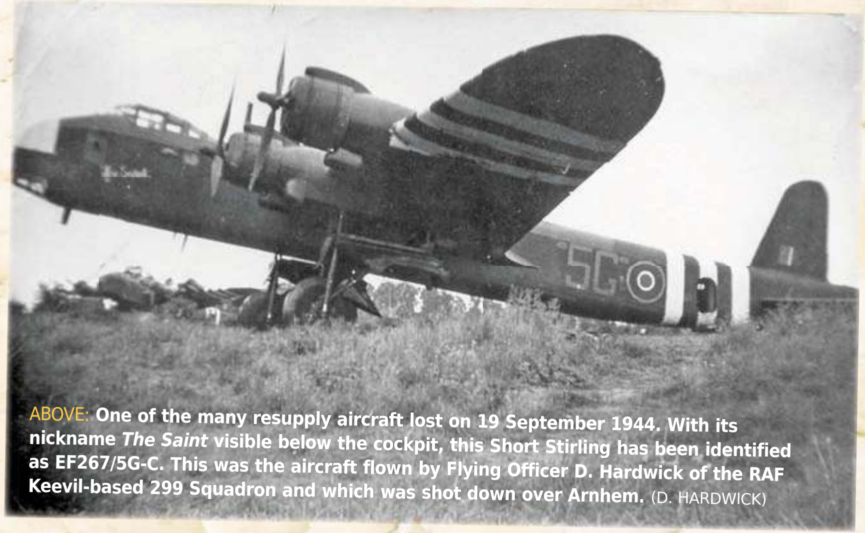
Suddenly, the green light flashed on and they started to drag the first pannier along the track. It moved a little then stopped. The track had jammed, its rollers having been damaged by the German


AIRBORNE HOUSE
IN THIS BUILDING 30 MEMBERS OF THE 1st BRITISH AIRBORNE DIV. HEROICALLY DEFENDED
THEMSELVES AGAINST SUPERIOR FORCES FROM THE 17th TO THE 19th OF SEPT 1944



ABOVE RIGHT: **This memorial plaque can be seen on the front wall of No.72 Utrechtseweg in Arnhem. It was in this building that Major Victor Dover and 'C' Company of the 2nd Parachute Battalion made their last stand, only being forced to capitulate on 19 September because of very high casualties. This was, in effect, the closest point that the 1st Airborne Division came to the bridge along this, the so-called Middle Route.** (BOTH HMP)

ABOVE: **The moment that a Douglas C-47 plunged to earth and exploded on Landing Zone 'W'. Though the original US Signal Corps caption states that this picture was taken on 23 September 1944, more recent research suggests that it in fact depicts an event four days earlier on the 19th. Two parachutes were seen to open in the moments before impact.** (US NATIONAL ARCHIVES)



ABOVE: **One of the many resupply aircraft lost on 19 September 1944. With its nickname *The Saint* visible below the cockpit, this Short Stirling has been identified as EF267/5G-C. This was the aircraft flown by Flying Officer D. Hardwick of the RAF Keevil-based 299 Squadron and which was shot down over Arnhem.** (D. HARDWICK)

anti-aircraft fire. With the rollers not working, King and the four despatchers had to manhandle the pannier out of the open doorway. Then, with two panniers remaining on board, the red signal to stop despatching was received!

Lord, having been told of the situation in the hold, instructed the crew to stand by as he intended to make a return run, unaware that the Supply Drop Point had been overrun. He put the aircraft into a steep bank, and the men in the hold had to cling to the fuselage for fear of being flung out of the open doorway. Through the murderous hail of flak, Lord brought KG374 down to just 600 feet. Then the green light reappeared and the last two panniers were pushed out.

An eyewitness on the ground described the scene: "One of the Dakota aircraft had been hit and its starboard wing was burning fiercely, standing in the doorway I could see the uniforms of the dispatchers as they pushed the supplies into space, the aircraft would soon be too low for them to jump. They must have been aware of this, but they still worked on pushing the panniers out."

With their task completed and the disintegration of the starboard wing only moments away, Lord gave the order to bale out. King and Ballantyne assisted the despatchers to put on their parachutes. "These men", said King, "were not volunteers like aircrew, they received no Flying Pay, yet were, without doubt, superb in fulfillment of their duty – even though KG374 was burning for the whole period over the Drop Zone".

## "A TREMENDOUS EXPLOSION"

Having put on his parachute, King now moved towards the open doorway. Suddenly there was a tremendous explosion as the Dakota's starboard fuel tank "went up" and the wing fell away. The burning aircraft lurched violently, before plunging out of control towards the ground.

For King the next few seconds were lost as the explosion threw him clear of the earthbound Dakota. The time was 15.16 hours. King, though badly winded, had landed alive. The aircraft from which he had miraculously escaped crashed in a nearby field, killing the remainder of the crew.

A German officer who witnessed the incident wrote to the Air Ministry after the war. In his letter he said: "When the aircraft came down, a hush came over the battlefield, and for two minutes all fighting ceased, as the men on the ground, German SS and British Paratroopers, spontaneously saluted, in silence, the great courage of the men who had just died." Of the 100 bombers and sixty-three Dakotas, ninety-seven were damaged and thirteen shot down.

## "HIS COURAGE, LEADERSHIP AND DEVOTION TO DUTY WERE MAGNIFICENT"

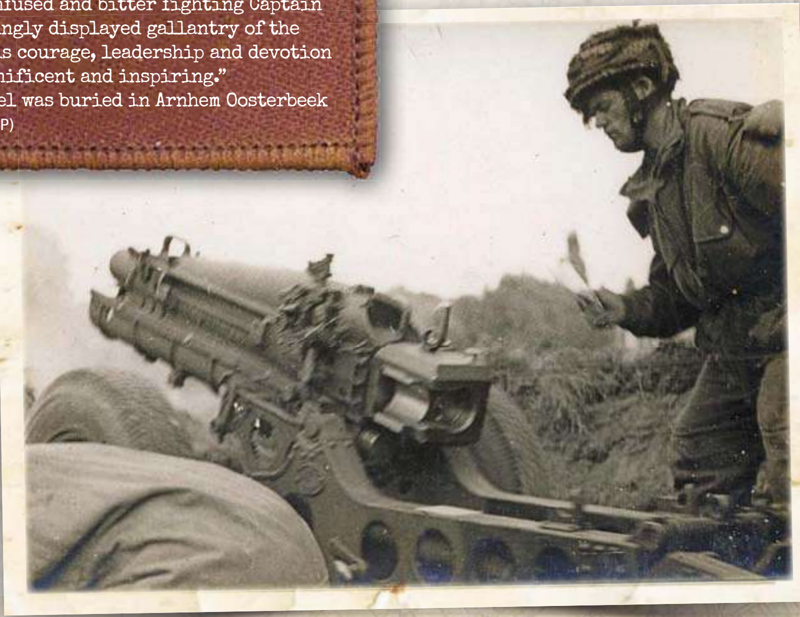
CAPTAIN
L. E. QUERIPEL V.C.
THE ROYAL SUSSEX REGIMENT
ARMY AIR CORPS
19TH SEPTEMBER 1944
DEARLY LOVED SON OF
COLONEL AND MRS L.H. QUERIPEL

SERVING IN the Royal Sussex Regiment, 24-year-old Captain Lionel Queripel was attached to the 10th Parachute Battalion at the time of the actions for which he was awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross during Operation *Market Garden*.

The following details are given in *The London Gazette* of 1 January 1945: "In Holland on September 19th, 1944, Captain Queripel was acting as Company Commander. When advancing on Arnhem, heavy and continuous enemy fire caused his company to split up on both sides of the road, and inflicted considerable losses. Repeatedly crossing and re-crossing the road under sustained and accurate fire, Captain Queripel not only immediately re-organized his force, but carried a wounded serjeant to the Regimental Aid Post, and was himself wounded in the face. Nevertheless he personally led an attack on the strong point blocking their progress, and killed the occupants, thereby enabling the advance to continue.

"Later, Captain Queripel found himself cut off with a small party. Although by then additionally wounded in both arms, he continued to inspire his men to resist until increasing enemy pressure forced him to order their withdrawal. He insisted on remaining behind to cover their retreat with pistol fire and hand grenades, and was not seen again. During nine hours of confused and bitter fighting Captain Queripel unceasingly displayed gallantry of the highest order. His courage, leadership and devotion to duty were magnificent and inspiring."

Captain Queripel was buried in Arnhem Oosterbeek War Cemetery. (HMP)



RIGHT: **The crew of a 75mm Pack Howitzer of 'D' Troop, 2nd Battery, 1st Airlanding Light Regiment RA, fires in support of the troops at the bridge on Tuesday, 19 September 1944. Standing on the right is Gunner Rumsey.** (HMP)

ABOVE: **It was in this area that Major General Urquhart became trapped on the 17th. With various members of the 3rd Parachute Battalion sheltering in the houses in this part of Arnhem and the fighting intensifying, Urquhart took the decision to return to 1st Airborne Division's Headquarters. In the subsequent attempt to break out, Brigadier Gerald Lathbury, CO of the 1st Parachute Brigade, was wounded. He was carried by Urquhart, Captain Willie Taylor and Lieutenant James Cleminson (who commanded No.5 Platoon, 'B' Company, 3rd Parachute Battalion) to this house – No.135 Alexanderstraat. Taken in by the family who lived there, Lathbury was then moved to St Elisabeth Hospital – part of which can be seen on the right.** (HMP)

ABOVE: **After Urquhart, Taylor and Cleminson left Lathbury at No.135 (the house seen here) they walked the short distance to the alleyway that Mark Khan can be seen here looking down and turned into it.** (HMP)

Harry King was not yet out of trouble. On regaining his senses, he soon discovered that he had landed in the middle of a raging battle. He sought cover from the bullets and exploding shells in a nearby ditch. He crawled along it until he reached some farm buildings. Here he met up with a glider crew who had also flown from Down Ampney that same afternoon. Moving on, they soon reached the small village of Wolfheze. Here, they found the railway crossing being held by men of the 10th Battalion.

Throughout that night the 10th Battalion was engaged in heavy fighting against an SS Regiment of superior numbers and fire power. At 09.00 hours the next morning, King and sixty-one survivors of the engagement, were taken prisoner.

David Lord's efforts, thanks to King's testimony after the war, were duly rewarded: "By continuing his mission in a damaged and burning aircraft, descending to drop the supplies accurately, returning to the dropping zone a second time and, finally, remaining at the controls to give his crew a chance of escape, Flight Lieutenant Lord displayed supreme valour and self-sacrifice," ran the words of an announcement in *The London Gazette* of 9 November 1945. That announcement was for the posthumous award of the Victoria Cross.

## XXX CORPS

The engineers had finished their temporary repair of the Son Bridge in the early hours of Tuesday morning. Soon the Guards Armoured Division was rolling eastwards again, though it was thirty-six hours behind schedule.

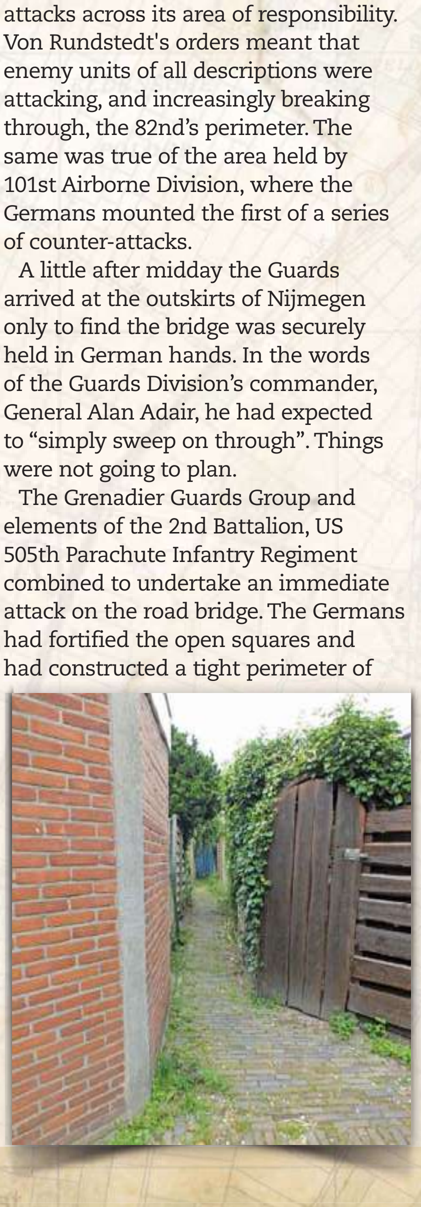
Progress for the British ground forces was, however, generally good. At 06.15 hours the lead British scout cars rumbled over the bridge at Son. Half an hour later they rolled into Veghel. As the tanks rushed towards Nijmegen they were waved on by the men of the US 101st Airborne Division who had taken and held the fifteen miles of road from Eindhoven to Veghel. The Guards reached Grave at 08.30 hours where they met the outposts of the US 82nd Airborne Division.[4] This was the sort of dash that Montgomery had hoped for.

Not only had the demolition of the Son Bridge caused frustrating delays for Horrocks' men but further obstacles stood in their way and these were going to cause them to lose even more time. The first of these was the Maas-Waal Canal, the bridge of which was found to be unsuitable for tanks. The Guards had to make a detour to the canal crossing just north of Heumen.

A far greater obstacle to be overcome next took the form of the bridge over the River Waal at Nijmegen which the 82nd had failed to capture. Indeed, the 82nd Airborne Division was also coming under strengthening German attacks across its area of responsibility. Von Rundstedt's orders meant that enemy units of all descriptions were attacking, and increasingly breaking through, the 82nd's perimeter. The same was true of the area held by 101st Airborne Division, where the Germans mounted the first of a series of counter-attacks.

A little after midday the Guards arrived at the outskirts of Nijmegen only to find the bridge was securely held in German hands. In the words of the Guards Division's commander, General Alan Adair, he had expected to "simply sweep on through". Things were not going to plan.

The Grenadier Guards Group and elements of the 2nd Battalion, US 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment combined to undertake an immediate attack on the road bridge. The Germans had fortified the open squares and had constructed a tight perimeter of



RIGHT: **After a few yards, the alleyway turned to the left, before coming to a dead end. Urquhart, Taylor and Cleminson then opened one of the gates on the right and entered the rear of No.14 Zwarteweg. This was the home of Anton Derksen, who directed the three men to his attic.** (HMP) defences around the southern end of the bridge. Hunner Park, which dominated the southern edge of the road bridge was especially strongly held. The Germans had also set fire to every fifth building until some 500 houses were blazing fiercely. "Into this hell plunged tank, Guards and US Paratroopers," wrote Horrocks, "but all to no avail. By midnight it was obvious that the bridge could not be captured by direct assault."[5]

### WHERE ARE THE POLES?

The other airlift of the day was that of the 1st (Polish) Independent Parachute Brigade, which was scheduled to arrive at Arnhem at 10.00 hours. As with the re-supply drop, bad weather in the UK meant that the departure of the infantry was delayed. The forty-six gliders with the brigade's artillery and transport was not due to set off from Down Ampney and Tarrant Rushton until midday and so was unaffected by the morning weather. As the day wore on, however, the skies did not clear and eventually the infantry airlift was postponed for twenty-four hours.

The gliders with the heavy equipment, on the other hand, took off at noon. Amongst the gliders were guns from the 1st Polish Airlanding Anti-Tank Battery, part of the brigade's Medical Company, and some of the brigade's Jeep transport. This amounted to thirty-five Horsa gliders. They were accompanied by another eight gliders with troops from the 1st Airborne Division who had not been able to fly in on the first two days.

A number of gliders were lost en route, six because their tow ropes were cut by flak and one which was hit right on its nose and disintegrated. Only twenty-eight of the gliders carrying Polish troops reached the landing zone at Arnhem. Then, though, they had to descend through the gunfire that met them as they tried to land.

"Gliders came down at all angles and from every direction," Major General Sosabowski wrote in his memoirs. "Some were on fire before they landed; jeeps with punctured petrol tanks flooded the wooden aircraft and red hot flak turned them into flaming infernos. Several gliders swooped into the trees, breaking off their wings, but the passengers and equipment remained unharmed."[6]

Remarkably, whilst several were hit by the ground fire, only one was brought down. On the ground they

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## WILLIAM OF ORANGE

IN A desperate bid to communicate the difficulties that Frost was experiencing, he called on William of Orange. This was not the hereditary heir to the throne of the Netherlands but a homing pigeon. Pigeons had been issued to the battalions at the take-off airfields and the suitably named William of Orange was one that been assigned to the 2nd Parachute Battalion.

He was released at 10.30 hours on the 19th and reached his loft at 14.55 hours. He had covered 260 miles, of which 135 miles was over the North Sea, in four hours and twenty-five minutes – this meant he had flown at an average speed of 61mph.

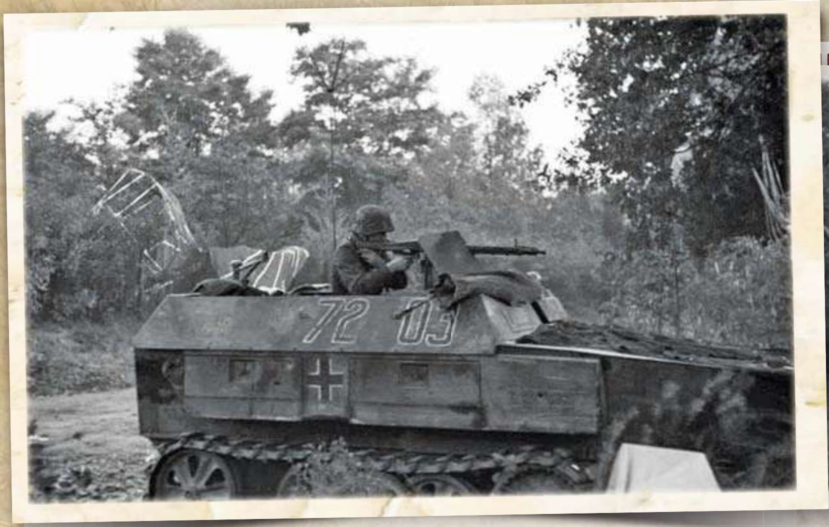
William of Orange (Pigeon Number NS 15125) had been bred by Sir William Proctor Smith of Bexton House, Bexton, near Knutsford. He was a mealy cock that was trained by the Army Pigeon Service. For his services during *Market Garden*, he was awarded the Dickin Medal in May 1945 for "delivering a message from the Arnhem Airborne Operation in record time for any single pigeon, while serving with the APS in September 1944". The PDSA Dickin Medal, recognised as the animals' Victoria Cross, is awarded to animals displaying conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty while serving or associated with any branch of the Armed Forces or Civil Defence Units.

After the war, Sir William bought William of Orange "out of service" for £135. Ten years later he was reported to still be alive, though "too old to race or breed". Lady Smith presented the Dickin Medal to the Royal Signals Museum in 1965.

ABOVE: **The grave of Flight Lieutenant David Samuel Anthony Lord VC, DFC in Arnhem Oosterbeek War Cemetery. The other five men killed in the loss of KG374 are also buried here – the two RAF men are together in Row 4.B and the four soldiers from the Royal Army Service Corps lie side by side in Row 15.B.** (WITH THE KIND PERMISSION OF MICK RIGGS)

ABOVE: **The front of No.14 Zwarteweg as it is today. The windows in the loft where Urquhart, Taylor and Cleminson hid are a post-war addition. Once in the attic, the three men realised that a German self-propelled gun had parked in the road outside – roughly where the photographer is standing. The presence of the enemy troops led Urquhart, Taylor and Cleminson to remain trapped in this house until the early hours of 19 September, when Derksen informed them that British troops were at the end of the road. The house is now called "Urquhart House" and a brick tile with the emblem of the British airborne forces (Bellerophon mounted on the winged horse Pegasus) can be seen in the pavement in front.** (HMP)

RIGHT: **Taken from the Oosterbeek perimeter, this picture shows Stirlings on resupply missions dropping their cargoes over Drop Zone 'V' on 19 September 1944. Note the bursts of anti-aircraft fire amongst the open parachutes.** (M. HODGSON)



ABOVE LEFT: **A German half-track, one of approximately six assigned to *Kampfgruppe* Spindler, in action on Dreijenseweg on 19 September. It is probably engaging men of the 156th Parachute Battalion.** (BUNDESARCHIV, BILD 101II-M2KBK-771-28/HÖPPNER/CC-BY-SA)

ABOVE RIGHT: **The same Sd.Kfz. 250 light armoured halftrack seen in the image above is pictured here moving further on down Dreijenseweg. Note the supply parachutes in the trees and hedges.** (BUNDESARCHIV, BILD 101II-M2KBK-771-31/HÖPPNER/CC-BY-SA)

continued to come under fire. Just three of the ten guns were unloaded, and only two of these reached Oosterbeek.

The infantry of the Polish Brigade remained kicking their heels in England, waiting for the weather to improve. They waited anxiously until the decision was made to call off the airlift for the day.

Operation *Market* was rapidly falling apart.

## THE HARTENSTEIN HOTEL

Urquhart knew his division was in desperate trouble. Frost was cut off with no longer any hope of being relieved or reinforced by the Airborne troops. The Poles had not arrived and there was absolutely no sign of XXX Corps.

Of Lathbury's 1st Parachute Brigade, the 1st Parachute Battalion numbered just 116 men and the 3rd Parachute Battalion could count only fifty – Lieutenant Colonel Fitch was amongst its dead. Of the Airlanding Brigade, the 7th King's Own Scottish Borderers and the 1st Border Regiment were still relatively intact, but the 2nd South Staffs had only around 100 men still fighting. In Hackett's 4th Brigade the 10th Battalion was 250 strong, the 11th Battalion had 150 men and the 156th Battalion reported 156 men still under arms.[7]

Hackett joined Urquhart at the Hartenstein Hotel to discuss the situation on what the divisional commander called "a dark and fateful day". He told Hackett that the 1st Airborne Division was no longer able to mount any sort of offensive towards the bridge. "We must at all costs now hold this perimeter on the northern back," he explained to the Brigadier, "and not allow ourselves to be destroyed".[8] This was the first mention of holding the perimeter. It was now all they could do.

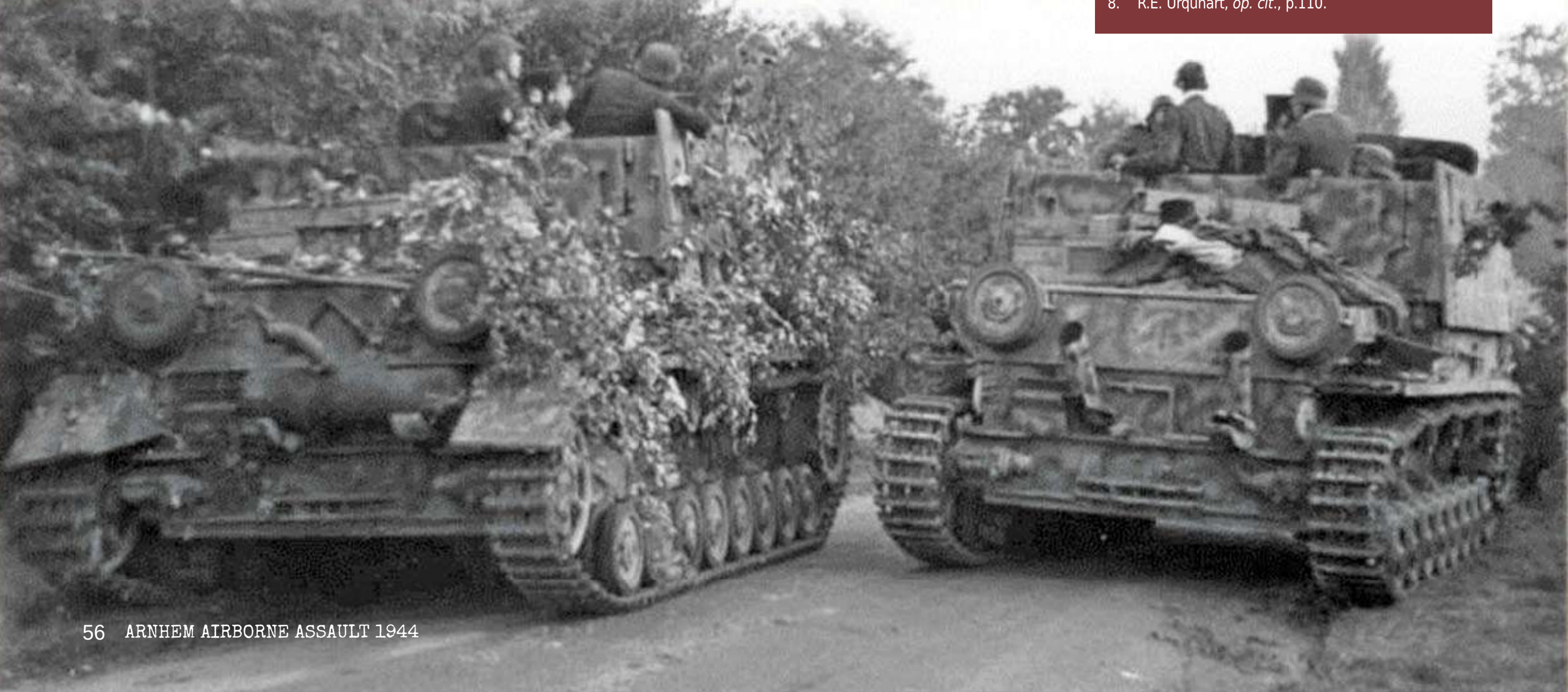
## LAST NIGHT ON THE BRIDGE

The previous attack by the German tanks had exhausted the men of the 2nd Parachute Battalion and they faced yet another long and difficult night as around them Arnhem burned. "Two great churches were flaming fiercely and for a while the shadow of the cross which hung between two towers was silhouetted against the clouds of smoke rising far into the sky," Frost observed. "The patrols we sent to probe the ring about us made no progress. It was like daylight in the streets. An enamel, metallic daylight. The crackle of burning wood and strange echo of falling buildings was almost continuous."

It was evident that the 2nd Battalion could not hold out for much longer and Frost went to discuss the situation with Gough. They both accepted that the end was near, and both were willing to fight until the end. But with the fires creeping closer there was an increasing danger that the wounded men stranded in some of the buildings would be burnt to death. As neither man was prepared to surrender the only other option was to attempt to break out and try to reach the rest of the division, leaving the wounded to be collected by the Germans. It was with such thoughts that Frost dwelt upon that restless night. ●

### NOTES

1. Charles Whiting, *op. cit.*, pp.99-100.
2. Martin Bowman, *op. cit.*, p.118.
3. John Frost, *op. cit.*, p.227.
4. Karel Margry (Ed.), *Operation Market Garden Then and Now, Volume 2* (Battle of Britain International, Old Harlow, 2008), p.330.
5. Brian Horrocks, *op. cit.*, p.218.
6. Major General Stanislaw Sosabowski, *I Freely Served* (Pen & Sword, Barnsley, 2013), p.155.
7. Cornelius Ryan, *op. cit.*, p.387.
8. R.E. Urquhart, *op. cit.*, p.110.



BELOW: **As well as half-tracks, the Germans could increasingly call upon fully tracked armoured fighting vehicles as the battle continued. Pictured on 19 September, also in the area of Dreijenseweg, these two Flakpanzer IVs are part of *Kampfgruppe* von Allwörden.** (BUNDESARCHIV, BILD 101II-M2KBK-772-04/HÖPPNER/CC-BY-SA)

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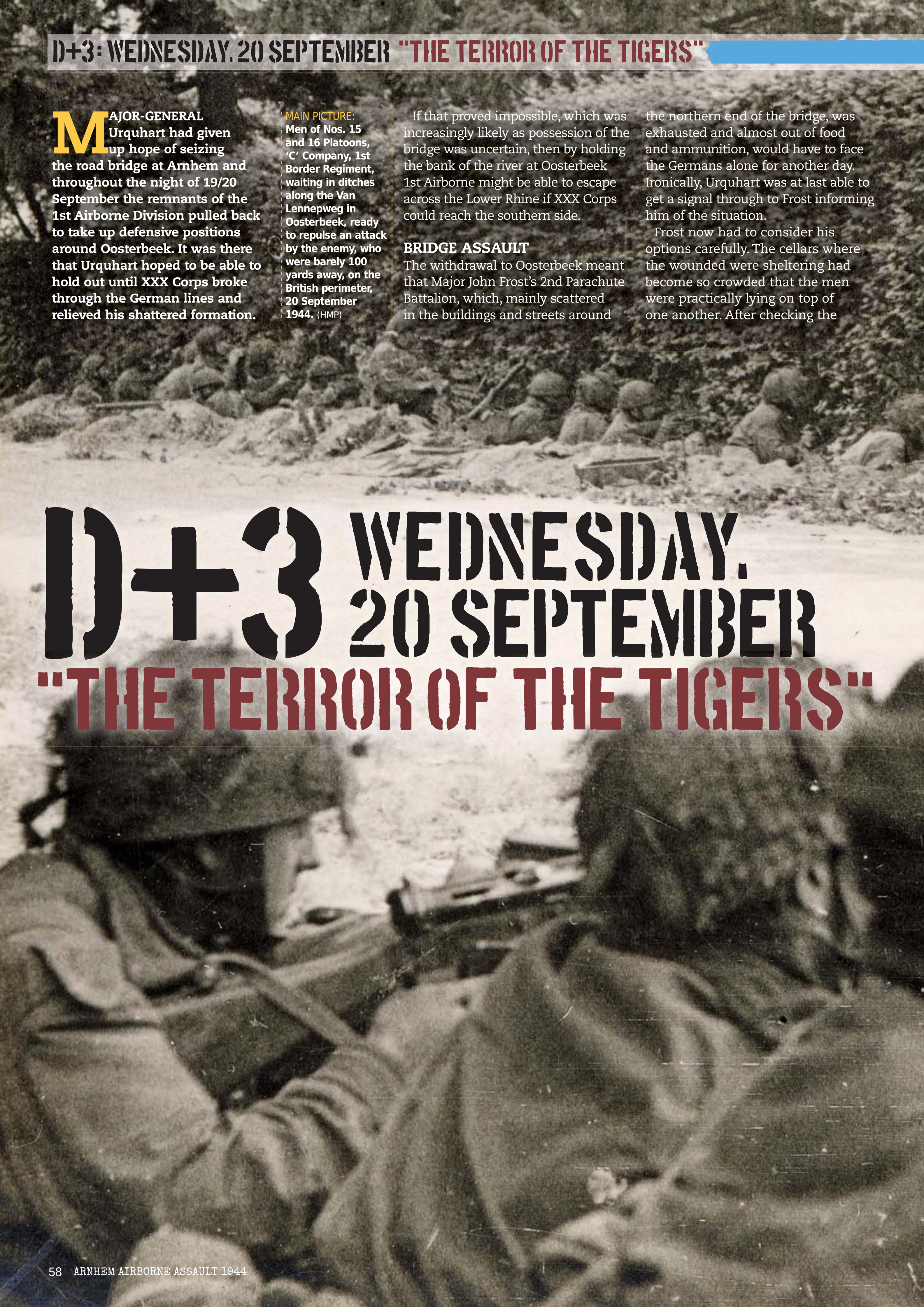
# D+3 WEDNESDAY, 20 SEPTEMBER

## "THE TERROR OF THE TIGERS"



MAIN PICTURE: **Men of Nos. 15 and 16 Platoons, 'C' Company, 1st Border Regiment, waiting in ditches along the Van Lennepweg in Oosterbeek, ready to repulse an attack by the enemy, who were barely 100 yards away, on the British perimeter, 20 September 1944.** (HMP)

**MAJOR-GENERAL Urquhart had given up hope of seizing the road bridge at Arnhem and throughout the night of 19/20 September the remnants of the 1st Airborne Division pulled back to take up defensive positions around Oosterbeek. It was there that Urquhart hoped to be able to hold out until XXX Corps broke through the German lines and relieved his shattered formation.**

If that proved impossible, which was increasingly likely as possession of the bridge was uncertain, then by holding the bank of the river at Oosterbeek 1st Airborne might be able to escape across the Lower Rhine if XXX Corps could reach the southern side.

### BRIDGE ASSAULT

The withdrawal to Oosterbeek meant that Major John Frost's 2nd Parachute Battalion, which, mainly scattered in the buildings and streets around the northern end of the bridge, was exhausted and almost out of food and ammunition, would have to face the Germans alone for another day. Ironically, Urquhart was at last able to get a signal through to Frost informing him of the situation.

Frost now had to consider his options carefully. The cellars where the wounded were sheltering had become so crowded that the men were practically lying on top of one another. After checking the wounded, Frost scouted round his defences. As he was contemplating mounting a fighting patrol to try and push out the boundaries of his position there was a sudden crash. "I was thrown several feet and I found myself lying face downwards on the ground with pain in both legs," Frost recalled. He was carried to the aid post and then into one of the cellars. He was given morphine and fell asleep. Frost was no longer able to command his battalion.

### COMMUNICATION ESTABLISHED

As well as being able to send a message to the 2nd Parachute Battalion, Urquhart was finally able to contact Airborne Corps HQ and inform them of the situation at the bridge and of the perimeter he had formed around Oosterbeek: "Enemy attacking main bridge in strength. Situation serious for 1 Para Brigade. Enemy also attacking positions east from Heelsum and west from Arnhem. Situation serious but am forming close perimeter defence around Hartenstein with remainder of division. Relief essential both areas earliest possible."

Some relief came in the form of a re-supply drop. A Eureka beacon (part of a short-range radio navigation system) had been set up on the roof of the Hartenstein Hotel and flares were fired as the aircraft approached. The transports went in, flying in loose pairs at 1,000 feet. Heavy anti-aircraft fire and ground haze made the aircrews' task difficult and only two reported that they saw any ground

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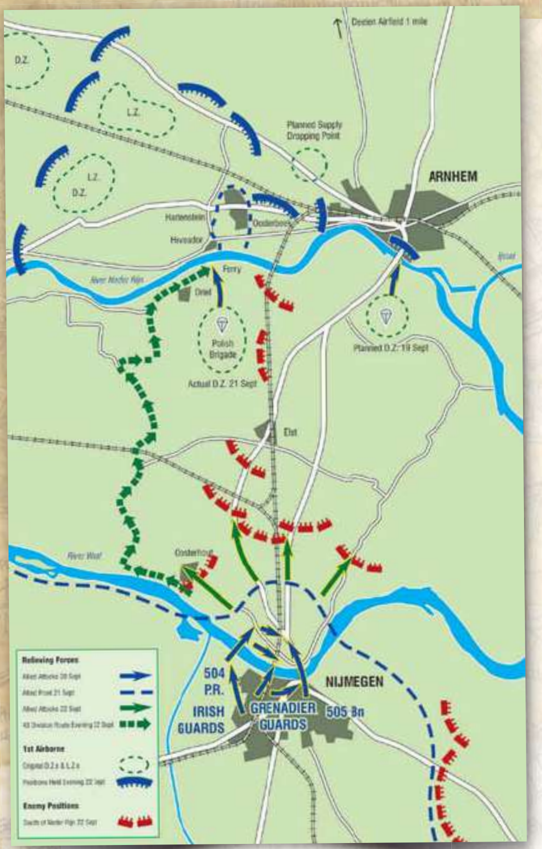
**The tanks were moving in, the lightly-armed forces defending the Oosterbeek perimeter certain to be overwhelmed. With just two six-pounder anti-tank guns under his command Lance-Sergeant Baskeyfield held the German armour at bay until he was the only man left alive – and still he fought on. His was just one of many heroic acts played out on the fourth day of *Operation Market Garden*.**

BELOW RIGHT: **The same stretch of Van Lennepweg today.** (HMP)

# D+3: WEDNESDAY. 20 SEPTEMBER "THE TERROR OF THE TIGERS"


Deelen Airfield 1 mile
D.Z.
L.Z.
L.Z.
D.Z.
Planned Supply Dropping Point
ARNHEM
Hartenstein
Oosterbeek
Heveadorp
Ferry
Lower Neder Rijn
Driel
Polish Brigade
Actual D.Z. 21 Sept
Planned D.Z. 19 Sept
Elst
River Waal
Oosterhout
504 P.R.
IRISH GUARDS
GRENADIER GUARDS
505 Bn
NIJMEGEN
Relieving Forces
Allied Attacks 20 Sept
Allied Front 21 Sept
Allied Attacks 22 Sept
43 Division Route Evening 22 Sept
1st Airborne
Original D.Z.s & L.Z.s
Positions Held Evening 22 Sept
Enemy Positions
South of Neder Rijn 22 Sept

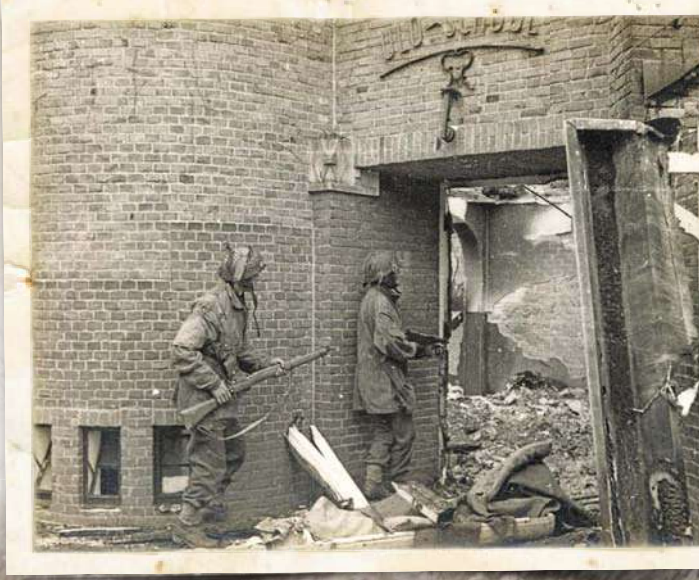
ABOVE: **The advance to the Lower Rhine between 20 and 25 September 1944.**

strips. Another saw a flashing lamp and only thirteen used the *Eureka* beacon for guidance.

Despite the best efforts of those involved, the results of the air drop were disappointing. Of the 2,400 containers, holding 390 tons of supplies, dropped by 100 Stirlings and sixty-three Dakotas, only forty-one tons, or 10.6% of the total, was collected by the British troops. All the rest was lost to the enemy.

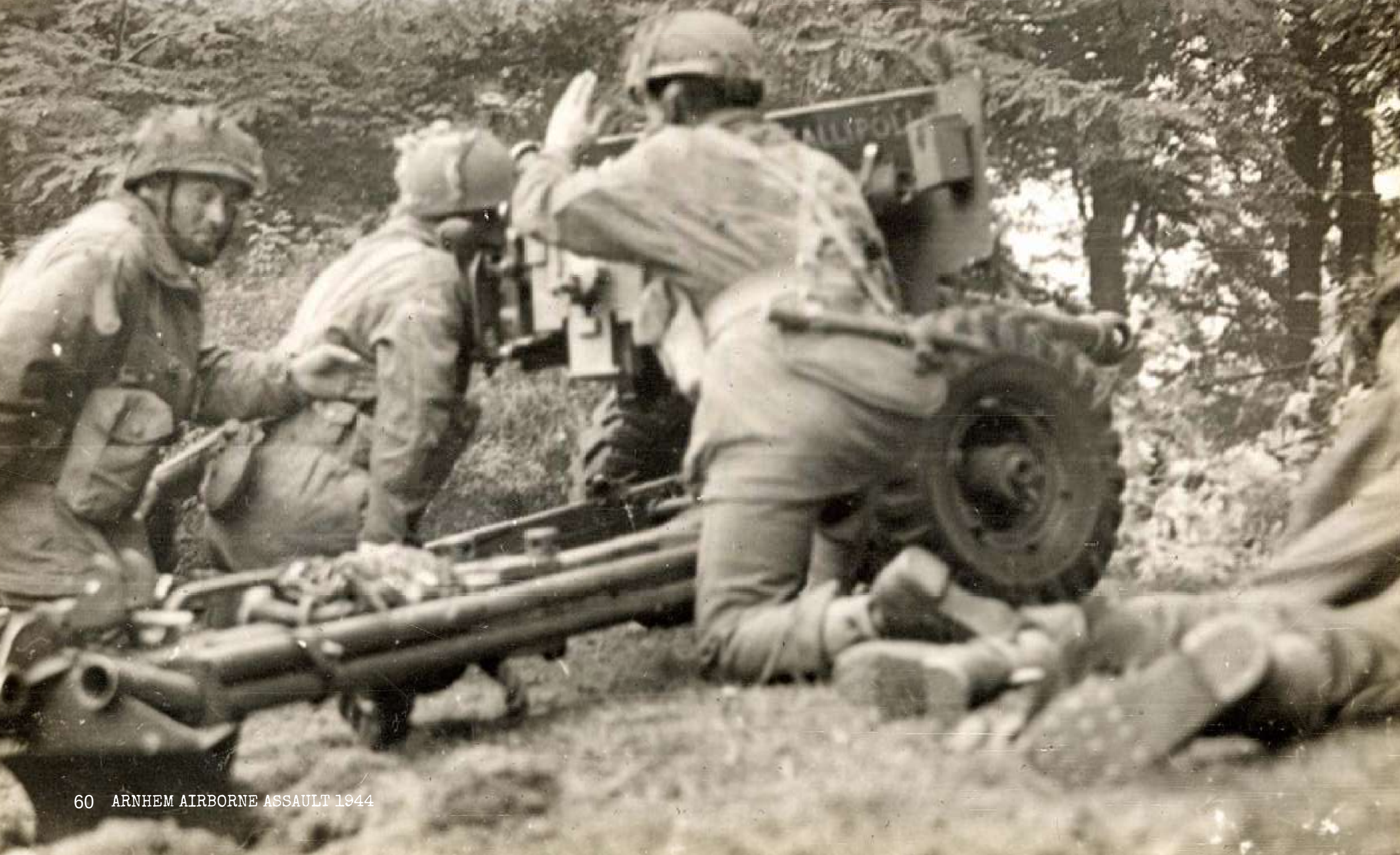
## THE OOSTERBEEK PERIMETER

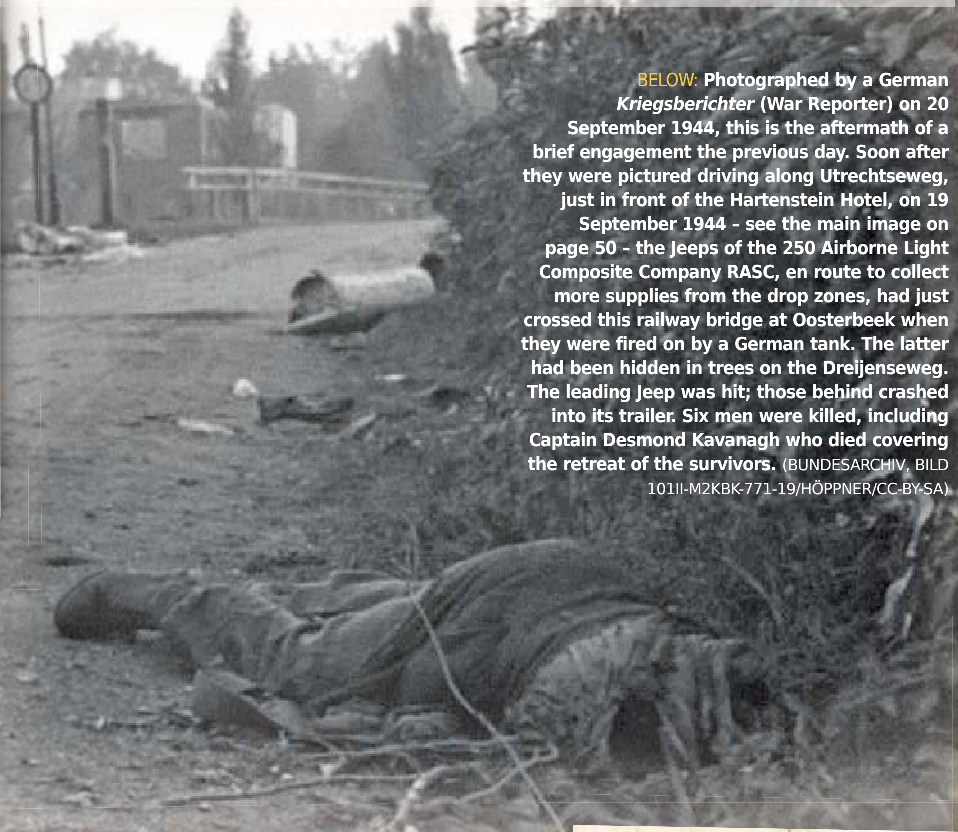
The number of houses initially held by the Airborne troops around the perimeter of Oosterbeek was eighteen but during the course of the day this had shrunk to ten. The perimeter's western limit was the high ground above the Heveadorp ferry, which to Urquhart's amazement was still intact and capable of functioning – and was now under his control. The northern edge was along a line to the north of the Utrechtseweg, and this was held by the 21st Independent Parachute Company and the King's Own



RIGHT: **Sergeant J.W. Whawell and Sergeant John Turl of 'E' Squadron, Glider Pilot Regiment search the ruined buildings of the Uitgebreid Lager Onderwijs school in Oosterbeek for enemy snipers, 20 September 1944. A supply container can be seen on the ground in the doorway. The two men were fighting alongside gun crews of the 2nd Battery, 1st Airlanding Light Regiment, Royal Artillery. Turl was killed four days later. The school was demolished after the war.** (HMP)

BELOW: **A 6-pounder anti-tank gun, named *Gallipoli II*, of No. 26 Anti-Tank Platoon, 1st Border Regiment, 1st Airborne Division in action at Arnhem on 20 September 1944. Located near the junction of Utrechtseweg and Van Lennepweg (possibly in the grounds of No.17 Van Lennepweg) to the west of Oosterbeek, at the moment this picture was taken the gun's crew was engaging a German PzKpfw B2 (f) tank (a captured, but modernised, heavy French tank) at a range of eighty yards. They successfully knocked it out. The crew are, left to right: Unknown, Lance-Corporal Eccles, Private Taffy Barr, and Private Joe Cunnington.** (HMP)





BELOW: **Photographed by a German *Kriegsberichter* (War Reporter) on 20 September 1944, this is the aftermath of a brief engagement the previous day. Soon after they were pictured driving along Utrechtseweg, just in front of the Hartenstein Hotel, on 19 September 1944 - see the main image on page 50 - the Jeeps of the 250 Airborne Light Composite Company RASC, en route to collect more supplies from the drop zones, had just crossed this railway bridge at Oosterbeek when they were fired on by a German tank. The latter had been hidden in trees on the Dreijenseweg. The leading Jeep was hit; those behind crashed into its trailer. Six men were killed, including Captain Desmond Kavanagh who died covering the retreat of the survivors.** (BUNDESARCHIV, BILD 101II-M2KBK-771-19/HÖPPNER/CC-BY-SA)

Scottish Borderers. The southern edge was, of course, the Rhine, where the 1st, 3rd and 11th Parachute Battalions were positioned. The eastern limit was along the railway line at the northern side of the railway bridge, and here was the 10th and 156th Parachute Battalions with some men of the Glider Pilot Regiment and gunners of the 1st Airlanding Light Regiment Royal Artillery. Finally, on the western edge of the perimeter was the Border Regiment, some more glider pilots, sappers and a few of the Polish airborne troops who had landed.

As the British paratroopers withdrew back to the perimeter, Spindler's 9th SS *Kampfgruppe* followed cautiously. Six or seven battalions of *Kampfgruppe* Von Tettau were also moving from the west on a wide front that included the drop zone of Ginkel Heath to the north and the villages of Heelsum and Renkum to the south.

Spindler's men began to probe forward along two routes. The southern route was along the Benedendorpsweg and to the north, towards the centre of Oosterbeek, the second route lay along the Utrechtseweg. The eastern side of the town with its narrow streets and tightly packed buildings was ideal for defence or ambush and the Germans were wary of advancing rapidly through such a densely built-up area. The road that appeared to offer the Germans the best prospect of penetrating into Oosterbeek was the southern one as along this route they were covered by their guns on the other side of the Rhine.

Along this route the Germans moved forward with armour supporting the infantry. Waiting there, however, was Lieutenant-Colonel William "Sheriff" Thompson, commander of the 1st Airlanding Light Regiment, RA. As his guns were in position only a short distance to the rear he asked the Paras and the South Staffs to establish a defensive line, facing the German advance. There, on the eastern perimeter of Oosterbeek, the men of the South Staffs waited for the inevitable German attack.

ABOVE MIDDLE: **Shortly after the picture of *Gallipoli II* in action was taken, one of the gun's crew, Private Joe Cunnington (sometimes named as Cunningham) was photographed posing nearby in a foxhole with a Mk.V Sten.** (HMP)

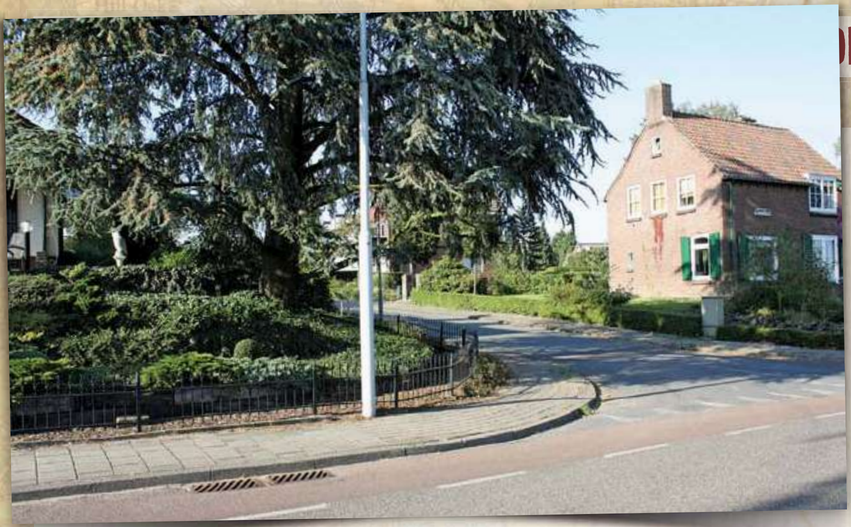
LEFT: **In their retreat from the ambush, the men of 250 Airborne Light Ccomposite Company RASC were forced to abandon all four of their Jeeps. Here one of these vehicles, photographed on Dreijenseweg, has been pressed into service by German troops.** (BUNDESARCHIV, BILD 101II-M2KBK-771-27/HÖPPNER/CC-BY-SA)

ABOVE RIGHT: **Another view of one of the captured RASC Jeeps towing a 3.7cm PaK 35/36 anti-tank gun.** (BUNDESARCHIV, BILD 101II-M2KBK-771-26/HÖPPNER/CC-BY-SA)

## THOMPSON FORCE

The South Staffs had eight anti-tank guns which had been held back at Oosterbeek. At 11.15 hours on the 19th these had been called forward and incorporated into the defensive screen organized by Thompson, which included a single 17-pounder. Twenty-two-year-old Lance-Sergeant John Daniel "Jack" Baskeyfield, of the Support Company's Anti-Tank Platoon, was part of this screen with a section of two 6-pounders. His guns had been placed on the Y-junction of two roads – Benedendorpsweg and Acacialaan. His six-pounders faced up the Acacialaan, which joined the Benedendorpsweg from the north, and covered the likely enemy approach along this road. His right flank was covered by another anti-tank gun commanded by Lance Sergeant Mansell.

By nightfall the losses of the South Staffs had been so severe that the battalion numbered just 150.[1] The battalion came under mortar and ▷▷



LEFT: **The junction of Acacialaan (heading away from the camera) and Benedendorpsweg – where the photographer is standing. The view is roughly that which was drawn by Bryan de Grineau back in 1944 (below); the 6-pounder which Baskeyfield was killed by would have been located by the tree on the left – hence is called the "Jack Baskeyfield Tree".** (HMP)

ABOVE RIGHT: **Looking down Acacialaan towards the junction with Benedendorpsweg. The two 6-pounder guns were positioned each side of Acacialaan – Baskeyfield's original one in the garden on the left; the one he was killed at in the garden on the right.** (HMP)

artillery fire throughout the night and the 17-pounder was put out of action. The next morning all the infantry in the eastern sector of the Oosterbeek perimeter was put under the command of Thompson and designated "Thompson Force".

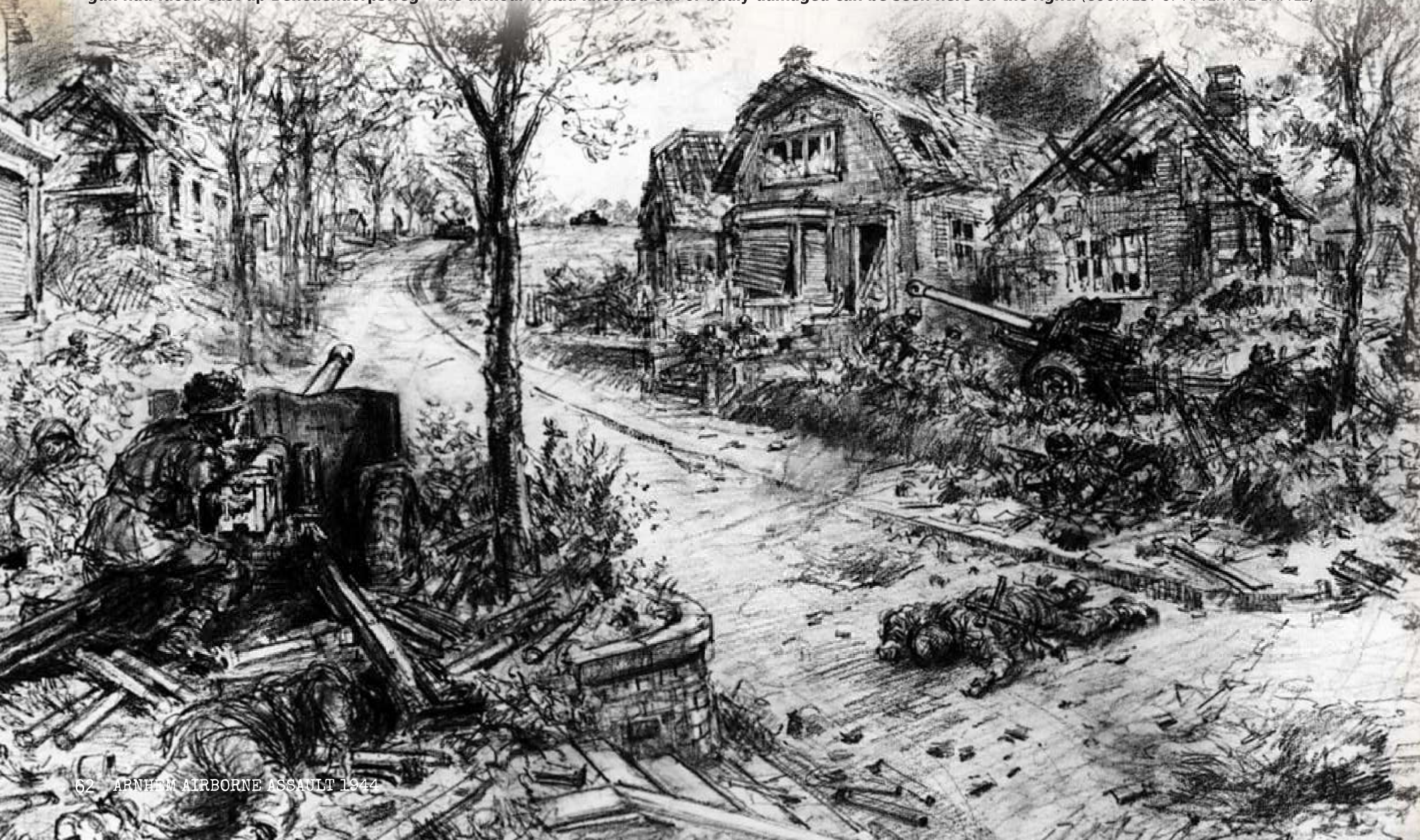
Soon after dawn on 20 September, the Germans again pushed hard against the eastern perimeter with infantry, tanks and self-propelled guns. According to Major Richard Lonsdale of the 11th Parachute Battalion it was about 06.00 hours when the first attack was mounted: "I was standing at the doorway of my headquarters, a house set back from a cross-roads, when I heard a shout 'Look out, they're coming', and sure enough, they were. A quick glance showed me three German tanks edging out of a wood two hundred yards away, and immediately we let drive at them with every automatic we had."[2]

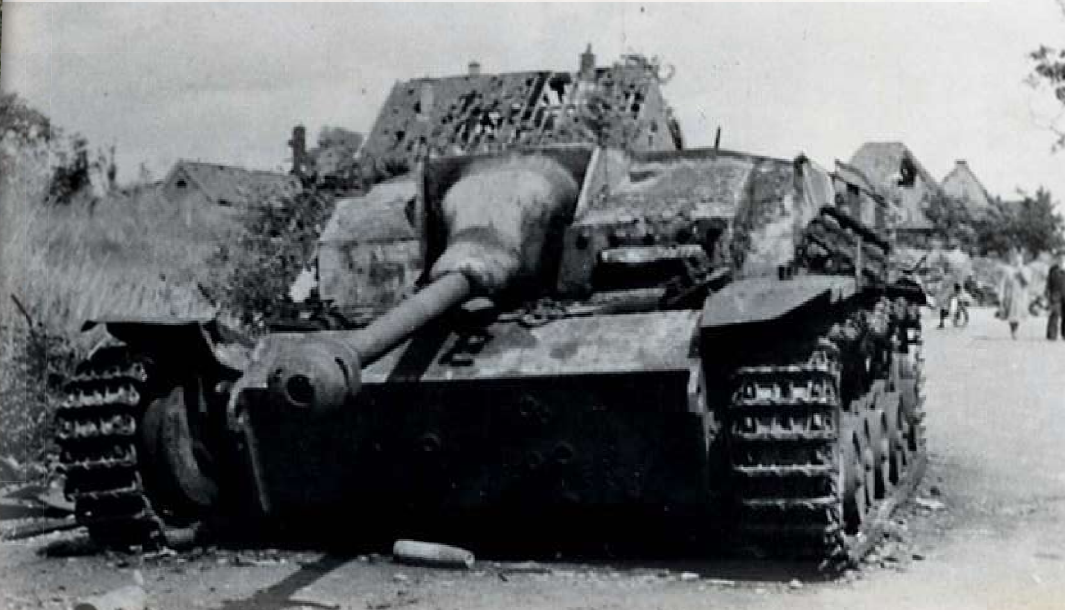
It was the German mortar fire, which at times reached a density of fifty bombs a minute, which initially caused the heaviest casualties. There was no safe cover from it anywhere, not even in a well-dug and well-sited slit trench. One survivor said that some of the dug-outs looked more like graves than trenches.

As the enemy advanced, Private Jim Gardner of the 1st Parachute Battalion was involved in the close-quarter fighting: "They came at us with all the fury they could muster. We got out of our trenches to meet the infantry and more than held our own but we gave ground against the tanks. Between the mist from the river, the explosions of mortars and shells, etc., we could not see one another after a while – it was a mixture of dust, smoke and fog. I felt oddly alone, when out of the smoke, etc., a figure emerged with rifle and bayonet out in front of him. I waited a while to be sure who was there. At about four to five feet I could see by the helmet that he was one of 'theirs'. I turned to face him, but he stopped in his tracks and, realizing who was confronting him, turned and scarpered back inside the smoke."[3]

Not all of the men of the South Staffs

BELOW: **A contemporary wartime illustration that graphically depicts the last moments of Lance-Sergeant John Daniel Baskeyfield's epic stand at Arnhem. The artist, Bryan de Grineau, drew this impression of the feat about a week after it had happened. A War Artist, de Grineau was attached to the British Second Army at Nijmegen at the time and made this sketch whilst being advised by an airborne officer who had been present at the scene. De Grineau has depicted Baskeyfield at the moment he had just fired his last round at the self-propelled gun heading down Acacialaan. Almost immediately after this, Baskeyfield was killed by a shell fired by the self-propelled gun visible further up the hill. In the roadway lies the body of a paratrooper shot whilst attempting to reach Baskeyfield. The latter's original 6-pounder can be seen across the road now pointing up Acacialaan before it was disabled. Before being swung round, this gun had faced east up Benedendorpsweg – the armour it had knocked out or badly-damaged can be seen here on the right.** (COURTESY OF AFTER THE BATTLE)





were able to withstand the relentless pressure of the German attack, as glider pilot Sergeant Bob Leeder observed: "I saw a woman with a pram running down the road towards me. Following her were ten to fifteen more civilians and, behind them, a batch of thirty to forty South Staffs. Most of them didn't have rifles, but I saw two, who did have them, throw them down on the roadside as they ran. A Jeep burst through this group and, when it was well clear, stopped, and an officer got out and started firing his revolver in the air. Everyone stopped, except the woman with the pram. The officer spoke to the South Staffs. I couldn't hear what he said, but it must have been something like, 'Get back, you silly sods', because they turned about, and he got an NCO to form them up and march them back. I asked the Jeep driver what was happening. He said, 'Flame-throwers up there, and it started a panic'."[4]

## "FIRING LIKE HELL"

German tanks continue to press forward against the eastern perimeter, firing down from the railway embankment straight into the positions held by the British. The German self-propelled guns attacked over the Benedendorpsweg and the South Staffs anti-tank guns immediately came into play, the rest of the battalion being ordered to pull back to a position 300 yards north-east of Oosterbeek church.

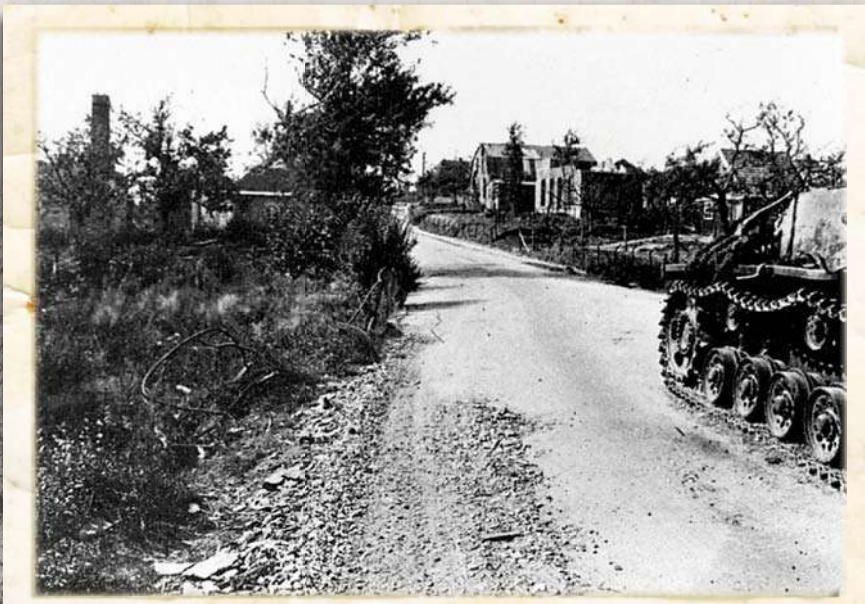
"When my gun commander Corporal Wade called for a brew of tea," recalled Private John Wilkinson of the 2nd Anti-Tank Platoon, Support Company, "I went to the Jeep that was hidden between two semi-detached houses. I whipped across the Acacialaan to make a brew and came back with the tea and a hot treacle pudding, which was part of our rations. I felt like a waiter, and after serving our crew, we all felt ready for action.

"As I was packing the kit back into the Jeep a machine-gun opened up using armour-piercing bullets. Although I am not very big, I cleared the back of that Jeep and landed on top of a paratrooper who had dug a trench down the side of the vehicle. With oil and petrol pouring

▷▷

ABOVE: **Over the years since Operation *Market Garden* there has been some debate over exactly how many armoured fighting vehicles, and of which type or design, were destroyed, disabled or damaged during Baskeyfield's VC action – though, of course, none of this detracts in any way from his gallantry. This Sturmgeschütz III (StuG III) assault gun, of Sturmgeschütz-Brigade 280, was knocked out in Benedendorpsweg about 200 yards east of Baskeyfield's position. It is almost certainly one of the armoured vehicles depicted on the right-hand side of Bryan de Grineau's drawing.** (COURTESY OF AFTER THE BATTLE)

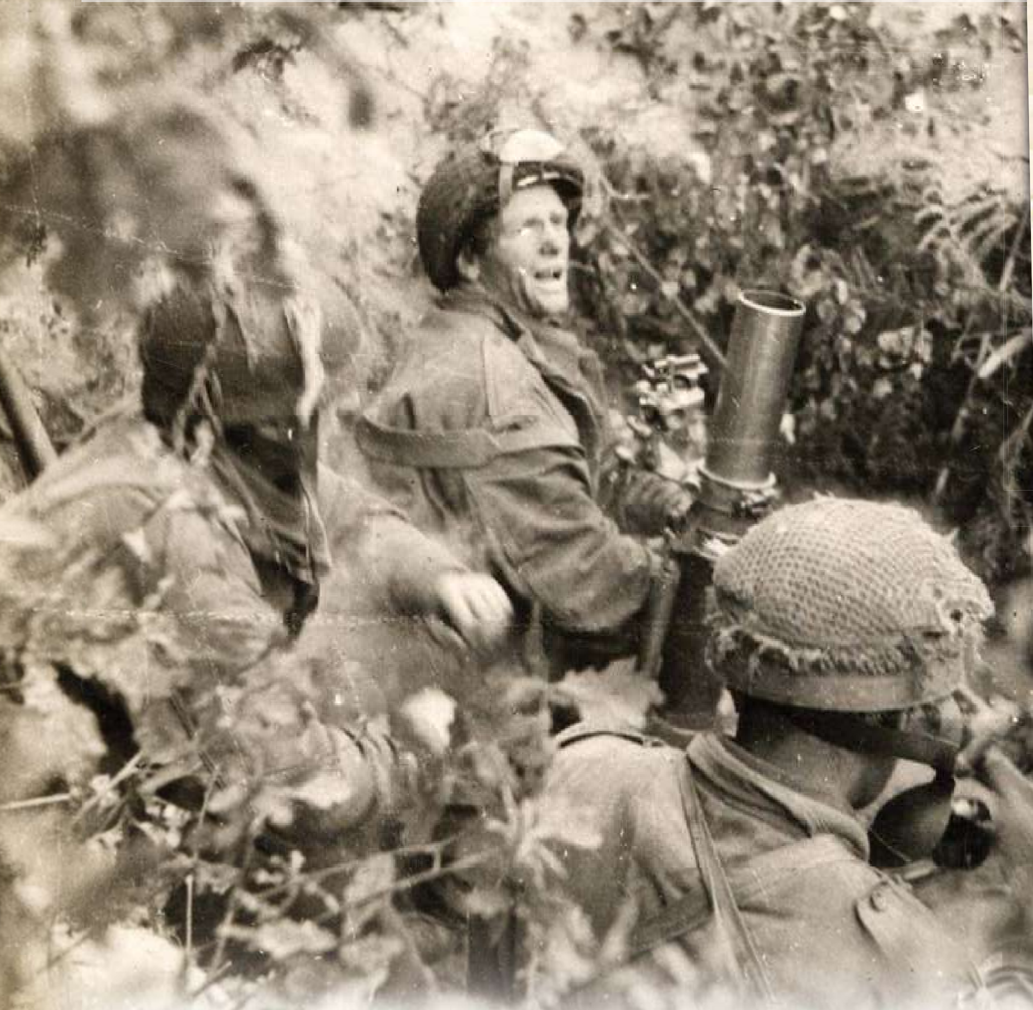
ABOVE: **In this modern comparison, the StuG III would have come to a halt on the side of the road roughly where the speed bump is.** (HMP)



LEFT: **This view was taken from beside the StuG III looking back towards Baskeyfield's position at the junction of Acacialaan and Benedendorpsweg – the actual turning is around the sloping bend just below the brow of the hill in the distance.** (COURTESY OF AFTER THE BATTLE);

LEFT: **The same view today.** (HMP)

# D+3: WEDNESDAY, 20 SEPTEMBER "THE TERROR OF THE TIGERS"



ABOVE: **Another view of the 3-inch mortar team in action – in the Oosterbeek perimeter at Arnhem – on 20 or 21 September 1944. This is reputedly one of the first photographs received back from the Army Film and Photographic Unit men at Arnhem. In a letter dated 20 September, one of them wrote: "This is the fourth day of fighting and camera work is almost out of the question. All day we have been under shell, mortar and machine gun fire. We are completely surrounded and our perimeter is becoming smaller every hour, now it is a matter of fighting for our lives. If our land forces don't make contact with us soon then we've had it".** (HMP)

ABOVE: **Perhaps the most famous 3-inch Mortar Team of the Second World War. Corporal Jim McDowell, in the foreground, Private Norman "Jock" Knight and Private Ron "Ginger" Tierney (facing the camera), all of whom are serving in Lieutenant Mike Holman's No.23 Mortar (Handcarts) Platoon of Support Company, 1st Border Regiment, 1st Airborne Division, pictured in action in the Oosterbeek perimeter at Arnhem, either on 20 or 21 September 1944. This was one of two 3-inch Mortars attached to 'C' Company that were photographed by Sergeant Smith of the Army Film & Photo Unit on 20 or 21 September (there been understandable confusion in the records kept at the time) firing forward in support of 'D' Company and the forward platoons of 'C' Company on the Van Borsselenweg – on the western end of the perimeter on the 20th. Jim McDowell later stated that he could not recall the filming; had he known he would have turned round and smiled! One mortar position was located at the edge of woodland to the south of Van Lennepweg below Battalion HQ, with the second further back nearer the road itself. Note the ranging rods at the front of the mortar pit.** (HMP)

from the Jeep I told him to get out before we all went up in flames. This was the start of an attack and Jerry started to knock the hell out of us with his 88s.

"Back at our gun we were firing like hell. When we ran out of shells there was little we could do and a Para sergeant ordered us back to the church. Just before we ran out of ammo, there was this terrific amount of noise on our left where Jack's [Baskeyfield] gun was positioned overlooking the railway bridge. I heard later when I was at the church, that he stopped two SPs and one or two Tiger tanks that came up. His own gun was hit, so he dashed over to Corporal Hutton's gun to his left and, although wounded, operated it single handed knocking out one Tiger and was hit by the other."[5]

BELOW RIGHT: **German reinforcements continue to pour into the *Market Garden* battlefields. In this case troops of *Kampfgruppe* Hermann are pictured arriving in the Nijmegen area early on the morning of 20 September. According to one account this unit had marched from Cologne, a distance of just over ninety miles.** (BUNDESARCHIV, BILD 101I-590-2333-03/ APPE[ARPPE]/ CC-BY-SA)

A little more detail concerning Baskeyfield's actions that morning was given in a Supplement to *The London Gazette* published on 23 November 1944: "During the early stage of the action the crew commanded by this NCO was responsible for the destruction of two Tiger [sic] tanks and at least one self propelled gun, thanks to the coolness and daring of this NCO, who, with complete disregard for his own safety, allowed each tank to come well within 100 yards of his gun before opening fire."

In the course of this first attack Baskeyfield was badly wounded in the leg and the remainder of his crew were either killed or badly wounded. However, Baskeyfield's determination halted the German attack and there was a brief pause in the battle.

"During the brief respite after this engagement Lance-Sergeant Baskeyfield refused to be carried to the Regimental Aid Post," continued the entry in *The London Gazette*, "and spent his time attending to his gun

and shouting encouragement to his comrades in neighbouring trenches.

"After a short interval the enemy renewed the attack with even greater ferocity than before, under cover of intense mortar and shell fire. Manning his gun quite alone Lance-Sergeant Baskeyfield continued to fire round after round at the enemy until his gun was put out of action. By this time his activity was the main factor in keeping the enemy tanks at bay. The fact that the surviving men in his vicinity were held together and kept in action was undoubtedly due to his magnificent example and outstanding courage. Time after time enemy attacks were launched and driven off. Finally, when his gun was knocked out, Lance Sergeant Baskeyfield crawled under intense enemy fire to another 6-pounder gun nearby, the crew of which had been killed, and proceeded to man it single-handed. With this gun he engaged an enemy self propelled gun which was approaching to attack. Another soldier crawled across the open ground to assist him but was killed almost at once. Lance-Sergeant Baskeyfield succeeded in firing two rounds at the self propelled gun, scoring one direct hit which rendered it ineffective."[6]

The German attack was driven off, mainly through Baskeyfield's actions. However, whilst he was preparing to fire another shot he was killed by a shell fired from another German armoured fighting vehicle. "The superb gallantry of this NCO is beyond praise," concluded *The London Gazette* entry. "During the remaining days at Arnhem stories of his valour were a constant inspiration to all ranks. He spurned danger, ignored pain and, by his supreme fighting spirit, infected all who witnessed his conduct with the same aggressiveness and dogged devotion to duty which characterised his actions throughout." John Baskeyfield was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross.

ABOVE LEFT: **This information panel, just off the south side of Van Lennepweg, informs the passer-by that this was the general area in which the mortar pits seen opposite were located.** (HMP)

ABOVE: **German troops during a counterattack against US troops near the village of Riethorst. The road north from Gennep to Nijmegen is just out of view to the left. The two men on the left are operating a captured Browning machine-gun.** (BUNDESARCHIV, BILD 101I-590-2332-16A/APPE[ARPPE]/CC-BY-SA)

## THE KING'S OWN MEN

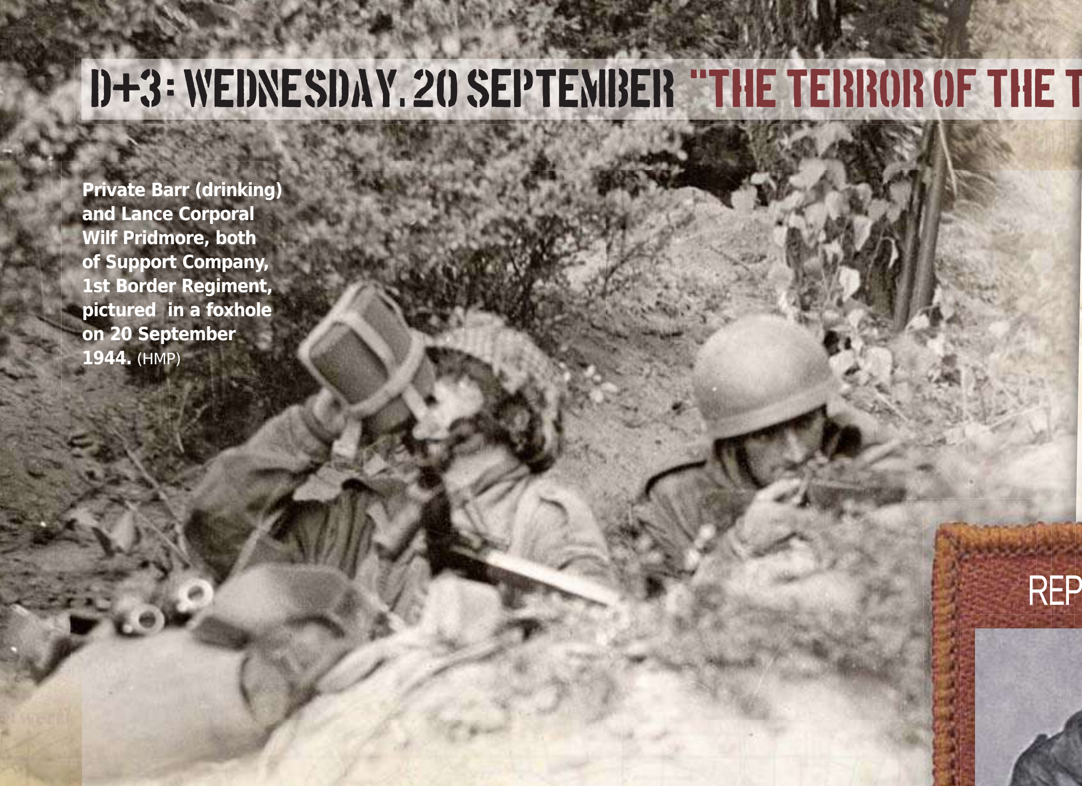
The 7th King's Own Scottish Borderers, now reduced to just 270 men (the remnants of three rifle companies plus a Support Company and Battalion HQ staff) also found itself facing German armour, and Lieutenant Hannah and Corporal Watson with an anti-tank gun managed to knock out one of the tanks. Company Sergeant-Major R.F. Tilley of the Glider Pilot Regiment found himself with the 7th KOSB in a situation where all the officers were either dead or wounded. He took charge of the group and held his position with such determination that he was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal.

It was not only the infantry that fought with distinction. Corporal Jock Moir, serving as second in command of No.3 Section of the 1st Airborne Division Provost Company, led a bayonet charge with five men of the KOSB, in which only Moir and two men returned. Provost Sergeant Austin Roberts was last seen with one arm blown off charging the enemy with a Bren gun under his other arm.[7] ▷▷

BELOW: **A convoy of lorries under enemy artillery and mortar fire on the road between Son and Eindhoven, 20 September 1944. In the foreground American paratroopers shelter in a ditch. Other images from the same series reveal that British medics and a number of wounded are just out of view to the left.** (HMP)

"Another soldier crawled across the open ground to assist him but was killed almost at once."

# D+3: WEDNESDAY, 20 SEPTEMBER "THE TERROR OF THE T



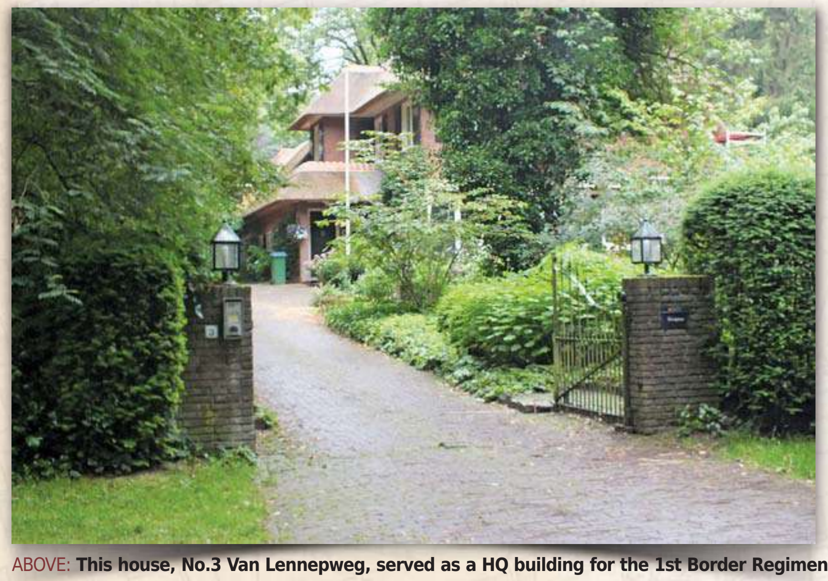
Private Barr (drinking) and Lance Corporal Wilf Pridmore, both of Support Company, 1st Border Regiment, pictured in a foxhole on 20 September 1944. (HMP)

## HEROICS AT THE BRIDGE

Lieutenant John Hollington Grayburn was in charge of No.2 Platoon in the 2nd Parachute Battalion's 'A' Company and had led the first attempt at securing the southern end of the bridge when the 2nd Battalion had first reached there on the 17th. "Jack" Grayburn was wounded in the shoulder but this did not stop him remaining in charge of his platoon throughout the succeeding days, holding an important position in the battalion's defensive ring. He even managed to extend his defensive position through a series of fighting patrols which prevented the enemy gaining access to the houses in the vicinity. This considerably helped secure the defence of the bridge.

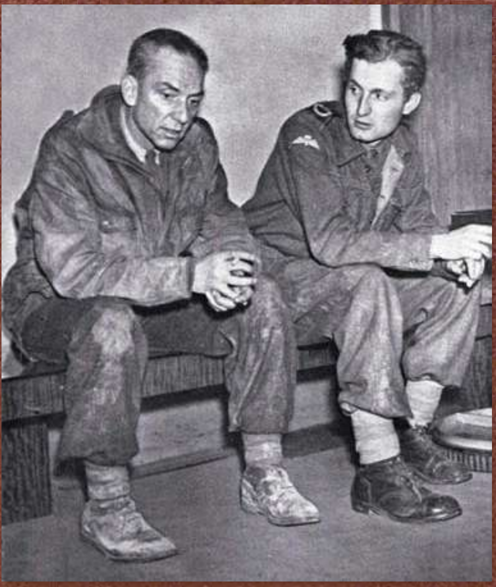
The unintended consequence of this was that the Germans decided to bring up tanks which brought Jack Grayburn's positions under such heavy fire that he was forced to withdraw to an area farther north. The enemy then attempted to lay demolition charges under the bridge. This looked like the end of the 2nd Battalion's toehold on the bridge.

"Realizing this," ran the words of *The London Gazette* of 23 January 1945, "Lt. Grayburn organized and led a fighting patrol which drove the enemy off temporarily, and gave time for the fuses to be removed. He was again wounded, this time in the back, but refused to be evacuated. Finally, an enemy tank, against which Lt. Grayburn had no defence, approached so close to his position that it became untenable. He then stood up in full view of the tank and personally directed the withdrawal of his men



ABOVE: **This house, No.3 Van Lennepweg, served as a HQ building for the 1st Border Regiment until the night of 25/26 September. In 1993, the bodies of Private Ernest Ager and Private Douglas Lowery (both of whom are listed as killed or died on 24 September) were found buried in what had been a slit trench in a garden here. In 1997, the remains of Corporal George Froud, killed on 21 September 1944, were uncovered nearby. The mortar pits in the previous pictures were located on the opposite side of the road to the house.** (HMP)

## REPORTING FROM ARNHEM



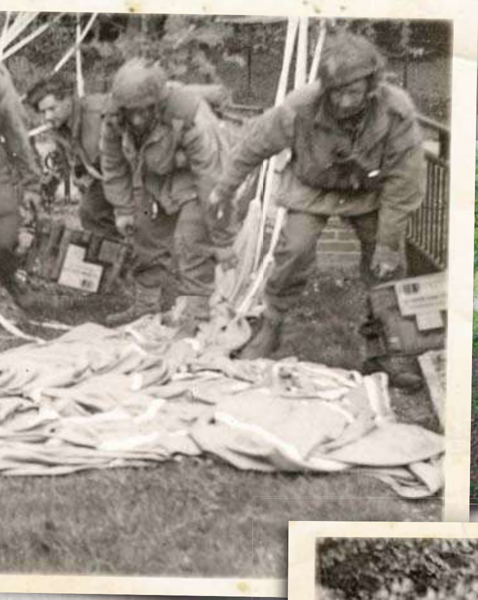
AMONGST THE most famous of the news reports from Arnhem was given by Stanley Maxted of the BBC when he described the attempt to drop supplies to the hard-pressed Airborne troops on Wednesday, 20 September 1944. This report was recorded on a small portable recording machine as he sat in his trench:

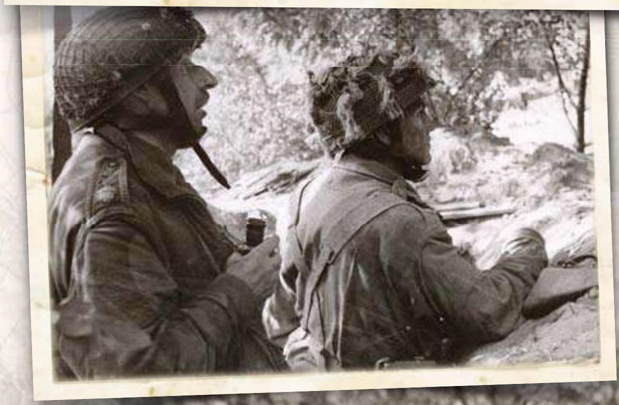
"Just a few minutes ago, the fighter cover showed up and right behind them came those lovely supply 'planes which you can hear above us now. Yesterday and this morning, our supplies came and were dropped in the wrong place. The enemy got them, but now these planes have come over and they've dropped them right dead over us.

"Everybody is cheering and clapping and they just can't give vent to their feelings about what a wonderful sight this is. All those bundles and parachuted packages and ammunition are coming down here all around us, through the trees, bouncing on the ground, the men are running out to get them, and you have no idea what this means to us to see this ammunition and this food coming down where the men can get it.

"They're such fighters, if they can only get the stuff to fight with. But it's a wonderful sight ... it's a shame when they can't get the stuff to fight with. You can hear the kind of flak that those planes are flying through, it's absolutely like ... [noise of flak] ... hail up there. These enemy guns all around us are just simply hammering at those planes, but so far I haven't seen anything, I haven't seen any of them hit ... but the bundles are coming down, the parachutes are coming down."

Maxted was amongst the last to be evacuated on 27 September 1944. He is pictured here (on the left) tired and exhausted – but safe – at Broadcasting House, London, on the night of his return from Arnhem. To the right is another War Correspondent, Guy Byam, who had also just returned from reporting on *Market Garden*. (HMP)





to the main defensive perimeter to which he had been ordered. He was killed that night." That citation in *The London Gazette* was for the award of the Victoria Cross.

## THE BRIDGE AT NIJMEGEN

It was not only the men north of the Lower Rhine who were coming under attack. The 107th Panzer brigade launched an assault against XXX Corps' line of communications at Son at 08.00 hours. To counter it the US 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment and the 15th/19th King's Royal Hussars, the 44th Royal Tank Regiment, the Sherwood Rangers Yeomanry and troops from XXX Corps HQ, were thrown against the German armour.

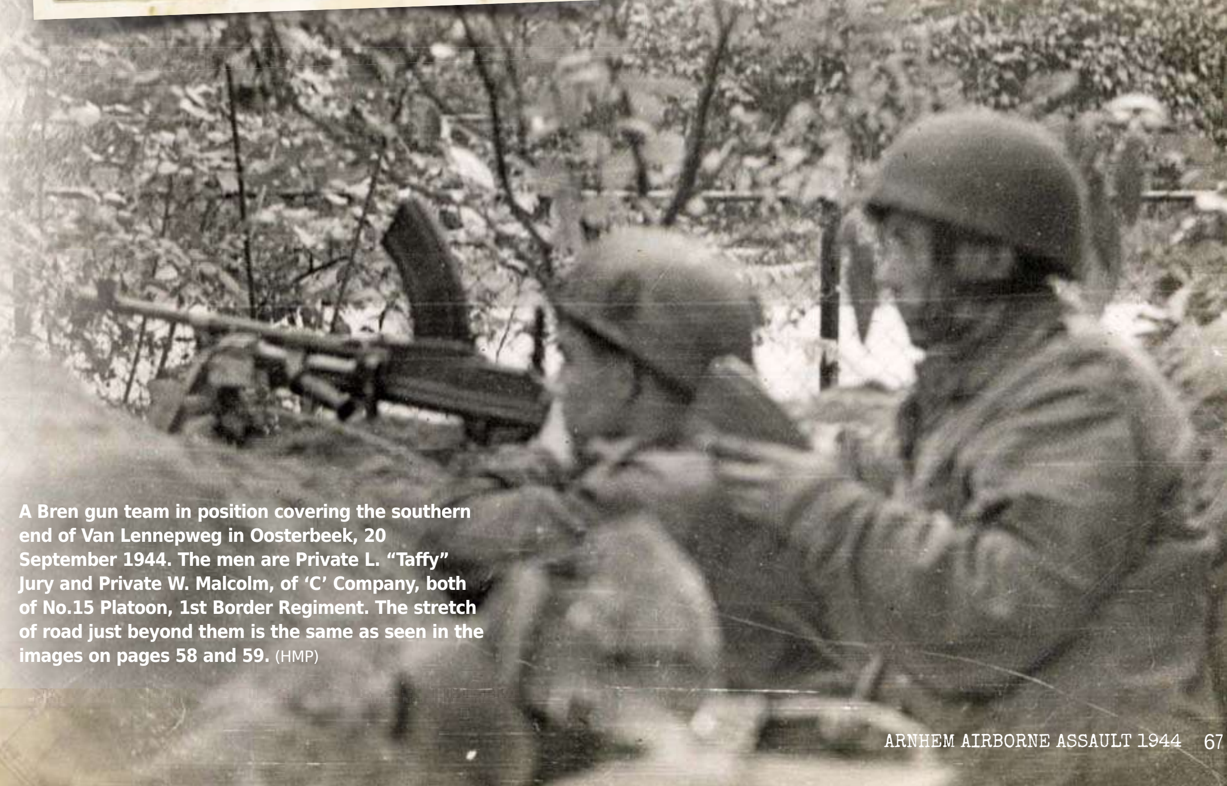
Though the Panzers were eventually driven off they succeeded in preventing the Guards Armoured Division from being reinforced for twenty-four hours. This meant that the Guards and the 82nd Airborne Division had to try once more to capture the railway and road bridges at Nijmegen without further help.

ABOVE: **Men of 1st Border Regiment recovering cases of .303 ammunition from one of the few supply canisters that fell within the British perimeter on 20 September 1944. This particular canister fell in the garden of No.16 Van Lennepweg. Most of these men belong to No.15 Platoon, 'C' Company. They are, left to right: CSM George Stringer, Corporal Jim Swan, Lance-Corporal Fred Webster (smoking), Private J. Boow, Private Eric Blackwell and one un-identified soldier.** (HMP)

TOP MIDDLE: **Close to a track which runs south from the south-west corner of Van Lennepweg, Mark Khan located what appeared to be the remnants of foxholes.** (HMP)

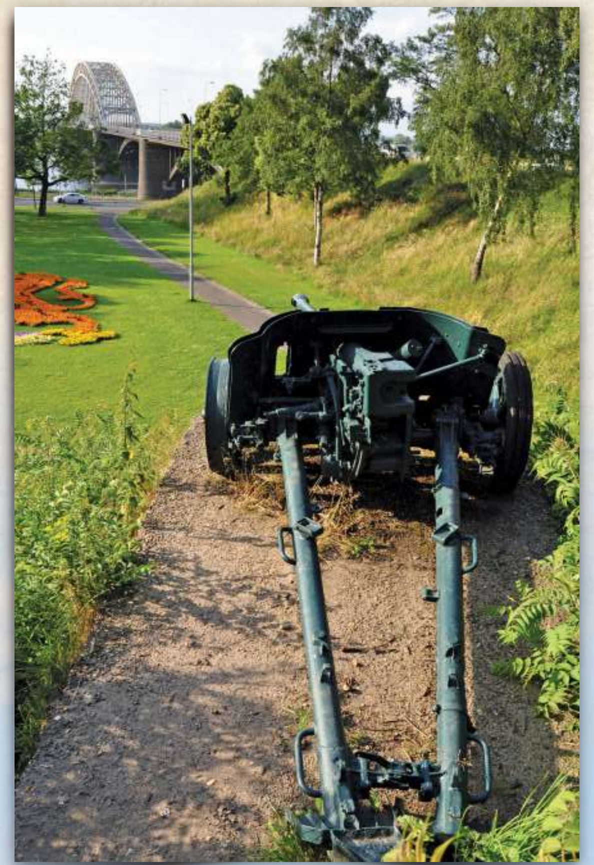
ABOVE RIGHT: **Major William "Jock" Neill, OC 'C' Company, and Lieutenant McCartney, platoon commander of 28 Medium Machine Gun platoon, of the 1st Border Regiment in their slit trench off Van Lennepweg, 20 September 1944. As this photo was taken the enemy were preparing for an attack and were no more than 100 yards away. Major Neill was later awarded the DSO for his part in Operation *Market Garden*.**

TOP RIGHT: **Located off Hoofdlann near the junction with Van Lennepweg, this building was used as a Regimental Aid Post by the 1st Border Regiment.** (HMP)



**A Bren gun team in position covering the southern end of Van Lennepweg in Oosterbeek, 20 September 1944. The men are Private L. "Taffy" Jury and Private W. Malcolm, of 'C' Company, both of No.15 Platoon, 1st Border Regiment. The stretch of road just beyond them is the same as seen in the images on pages 58 and 59.** (HMP)

# D+3: WEDNESDAY, 20 SEPTEMBER "THE TERROR OF THE TIGERS"



US Brigadier General James Gavin, Lieutenant General Frederick Browning, Lieutenant General Sir Brian Horrocks and Major General Adair (of the Guards Armoured Division) had already formulated an ambitious plan the previous evening. The attack would start by clearing the town. Once this was achieved the 5th Guards Armoured Brigade and the US 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment would assault the bridges whilst the 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment would row across the Waal in canoes to the west of Nijmegen and take the Germans in the rear.

The only available boats, however, were loaded on vehicles located in the rear part of the convoy of trucks and with the road to Nijmegen blocked by XXX Corps's thousands of vehicles, they did not arrive at the front until the afternoon of the 20th. This meant that the crossing would have to be undertaken in daylight. The crossing would be supported by the guns of the Irish Guards Group and the Guards Division's two field artillery regiments. Close air support would be provided by RAF Typhoons.

At 08.00 hours the Grenadier Guards Group began the task of clearing the enemy out of Nijmegen. This was slow work, with the Germans having to be driven back, building by building. Nevertheless by early afternoon the city had been cleared and Grenadiers were ready to assault the bridge.

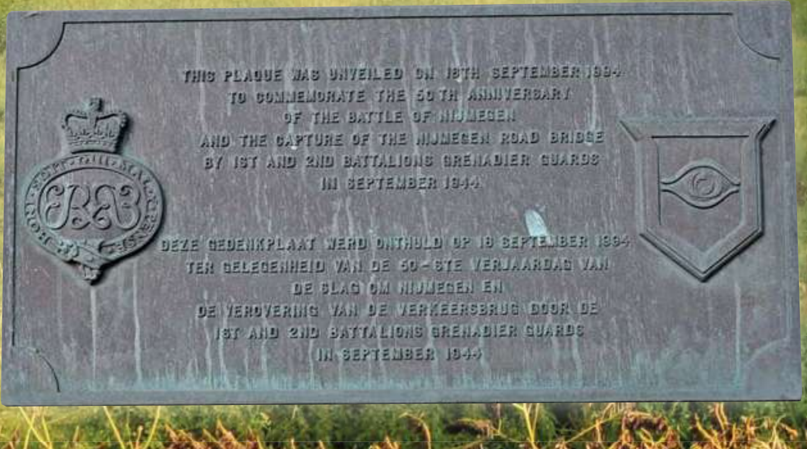
H-Hour had been set for 15.00 hours and the Typhoon attack thirty minutes earlier. Right on time, the Typhoons attacked the German positions on the northern bank. The boats, however, did not arrive for a further ten minutes. The twenty-six, nineteen-foot long, collapsible wood and canvas boats then had to be re-assembled, with the loss of more time.

## AMPHIBIOUS ASSAULT

Finally, under a smoke screen laid down by the Shermans of the 2nd Irish Guards, the men of the 3rd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment carried their boats down to the river. What happened next was a tragic fiasco.

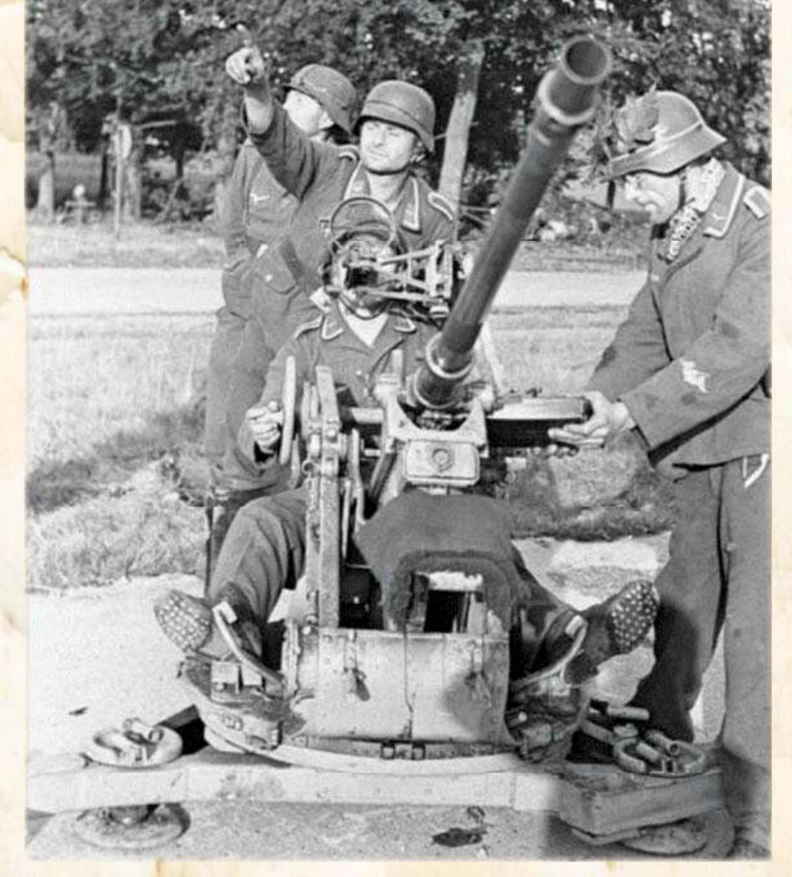
Some of the boats were placed in water that was too shallow and they became bogged down in mud. When the US troops eventually managed to drag them into deeper water and tried to climb in, they overturned the boat.

ABOVE AND BOTTOM LEFT: **Some of the German positions defending Nijmegen's road bridge were located in the grounds of the city's Hunnerpark which was located at the southern end of the river crossing. These positions included several anti-tank guns. One of these, a 5cm Pak 38, stands on a raised platform near the approach road to the bridge as a unique reminder of the fighting in the area in 1944.** (BOTH HMP)



THIS PLAQUE WAS UNVEILED ON 18TH SEPTEMBER 1994
TO COMMEMORATE THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE BATTLE OF NIJMEGEN
AND THE CAPTURE OF THE NIJMEGEN ROAD BRIDGE
BY 1ST AND 2ND BATTALIONS GRENADIER GUARDS
IN SEPTEMBER 1944

DEZE GEDENKPLAAT WERD ONTHULD OP 18 SEPTEMBER 1994
TER GELEGENHEID VAN DE 50-STE VERJAARDAG VAN
DE SLAG OM NIJMEGEN EN
DE VEROVERING VAN DE VERKEERSBRUG DOOR DE
1ST AND 2ND BATTALIONS GRENADIER GUARDS
IN SEPTEMBER 1944



LEFT: **Believed to have been taken on 20 September 1944, this picture of a 2cm FlaK 30/38 in position near the Leeren Doedel crossroads is interesting for what can be seen in the background - the wooden grave marker on the left in front of the trees on the far side of the road. This is believed to have been one of, or indeed both, Driver James Bowers and Driver George Weston, both of 63 Airborne Composite Company, Royal Army Service Corps, who were buried after their aircraft, the 575 Squadron Dakota flown by Flight Lieutenant Charles Slack (KG338), was shot down on the 19th. Both Bowers and Weston are still listed as missing.** (BUNDESARCHIV, BILD 101II-M2KBK-772-26/ HÖPPNER/CC-BY-SA)

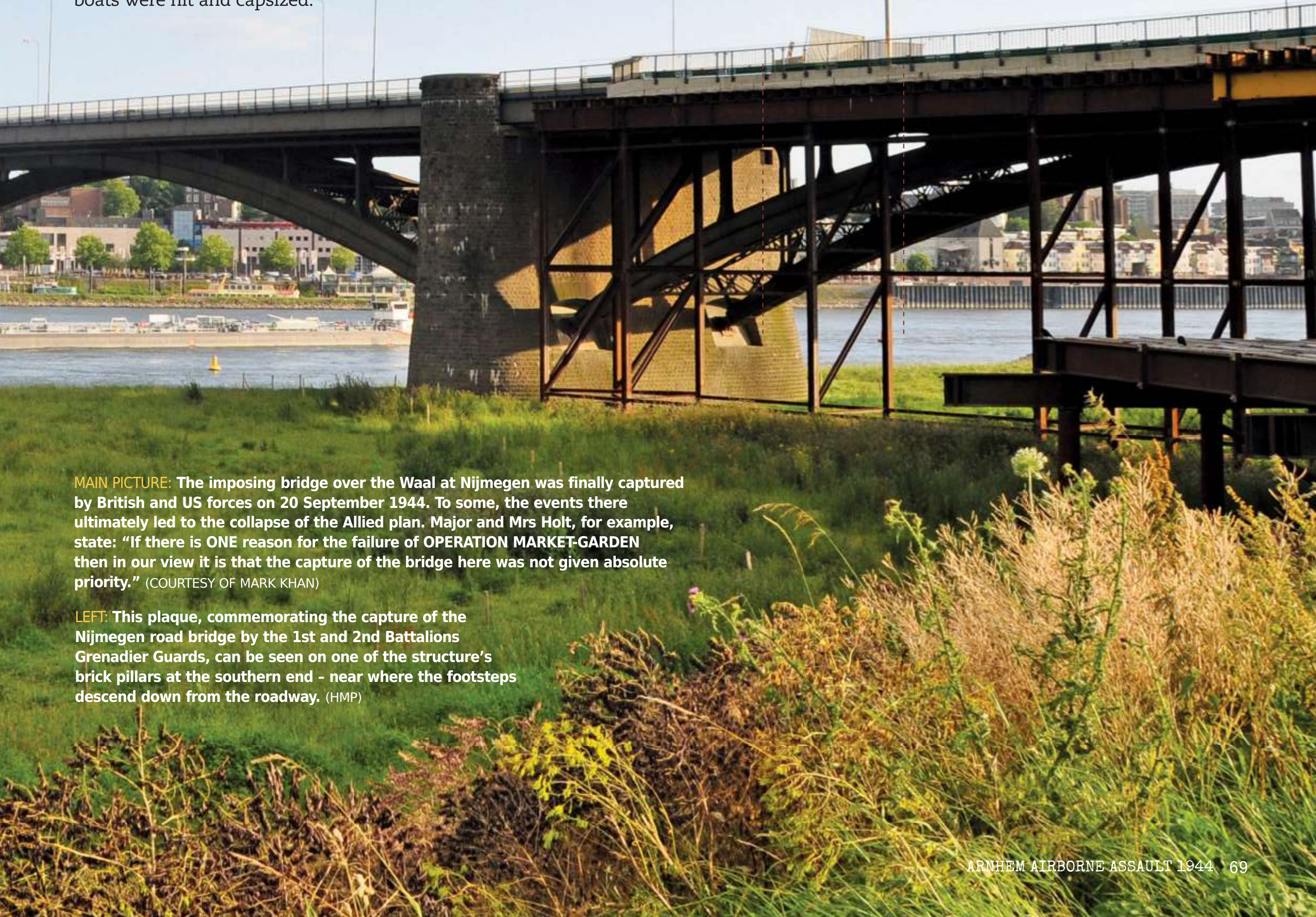
Some began to paddle the 400 yards towards the enemy-held side only to be caught by the current and began circling out of control. Then, despite the barrage thrown down upon the far bank of the Waal, the Americans came under intense fire from shells and mortar bombs and many of the boats were hit and capsized.

"It was a horrible, horrible sight," remembered Lieutenant Colonel Vandeleur. "Boats were literally blown out of the water. Huge geysers shot up as shells and small-arms fire from the northern bank made the river like a seething cauldron … I saw one or two boats hit the beaches, followed by three or four others. The men got out and began moving across an open field. My God! What a courageous sight it was! They just moved across that field steadily, I never saw a single man lie down until he was hit."[8]

Only about half the first wave reached the northern bank but, with bayonets fixed, they charged the German positions and within thirty minutes had cleared the enemy trenches. The second wave suffered the loss of only two boats to shellfire and the remaining eleven boats made five more trips to carry the rest of the battalion across the Waal. More than half of the two companies that had crossed had become casualties.

At around 17.00 hours two companies of the 504th attacked the northern end of the two bridges. By this time the relentless pressure of the Guards at the southern end had virtually wiped out the defenders in a mirror image of the battle that had been raging on the bridge at Arnhem.

Two hours later, a report reached the Guards that an American flag had been seen at the far side of the road bridge. That was



MAIN PICTURE: **The imposing bridge over the Waal at Nijmegen was finally captured by British and US forces on 20 September 1944. To some, the events there ultimately led to the collapse of the Allied plan. Major and Mrs Holt, for example, state: "If there is ONE reason for the failure of OPERATION MARKET-GARDEN then in our view it is that the capture of the bridge here was not given absolute priority."** (COURTESY OF MARK KHAN)

LEFT: **This plaque, commemorating the capture of the Nijmegen road bridge by the 1st and 2nd Battalions Grenadier Guards, can be seen on one of the structure's brick pillars at the southern end - near where the footsteps descend down from the roadway.** (HMP)

LIEUTENANT
J. H. GRAYBURN. VC.
PARACHUTE REGIMENT
ARMY AIR CORPS
FORMERLY OXF. & BUCKS L.I.
20TH SEPTEMBER 1944 AGE 26
"YET SHALL HE LIVE"
ST. JOHN XI 25

ABOVE: **The last resting place of Lieutenant John Hollington Grayburn, who was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross for his actions on 20 September 1944, in Arnhem Oosterbeek War Cemetery.** (HMP)

enough for Major John Trotter of No.1 Squadron of the 2nd (Armoured) Battalion Grenadier Guards, and he ordered his tanks to head straight for the bridge. They raced over the river, taking out an 88mm gun at the far end as they rushed forwards.

More tanks followed and sappers ran onto the bridge to disarm any explosive charges present and at last the bridge was secured. The railway bridge was also taken.

The Germans were now widely scattered, fighting desperate isolated battles in any building that gave them shelter. The 21st Battery of the 5th SS Artillery Training Regiment also continued to shell the road from the village of Oosterhout to the west of Nijmegen.[9] Nevertheless, the road bridge had been taken and Arnhem was just a dozen miles away. The time was 19.15 hours.

## SETTLING IN FOR THE NIGHT

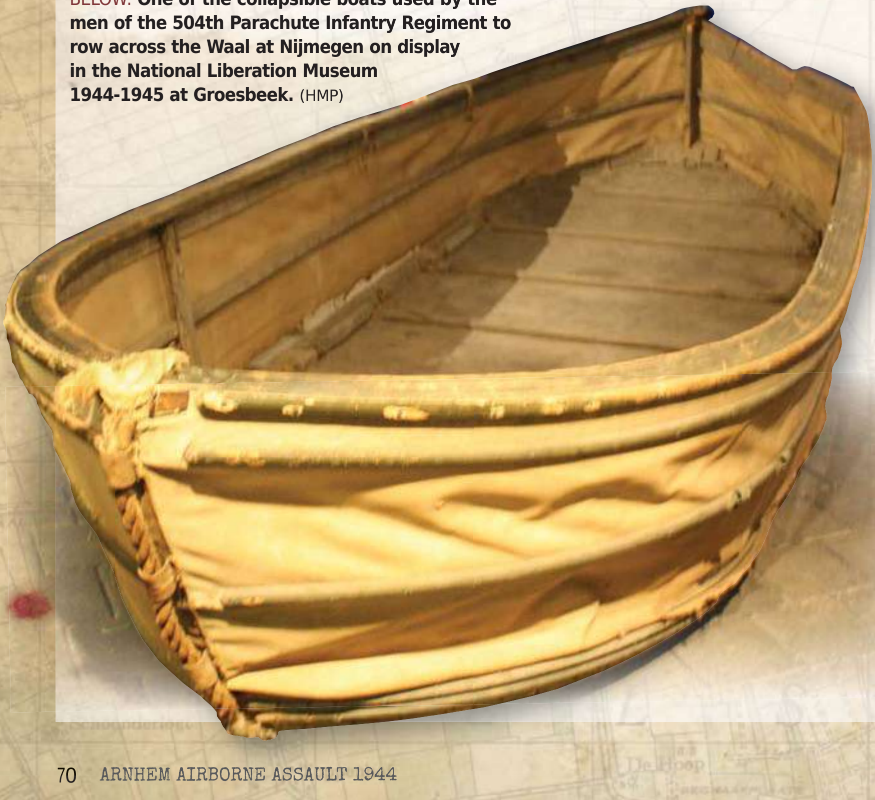
It might be assumed that the leading units of XXX Corps would have been approaching Arnhem within the hour. An officer of the 504th who had crossed the Waal and made the victory at Nijmegen possible, went up to one of the Guards tank commanders and said to him, "We've cleared the area ahead for about a quarter of a mile. Now it's up to you guys to carry on the attack to Arnhem."

The response the American received was that the orders the Guards had been given were "to hold the road and the end of the bridge at all costs". This he intended to do. He had no instructions to move beyond the bridge.

Colonel Reuben Tucker, the 504th commander, was furious: "We had killed ourselves crossing the Waal to grab the north end of the bridge. We just stood there, seething, as the British settled in for the night, failing to take advantage of the situation. We couldn't understand it. It simply wasn't the way we did things in the American Army – especially if it had been our guys hanging by their fingernails 11 miles away. We'd have been going, rolling without stop. That's what George Patton would have done, whether it was daylight or dark." Tucker, though, was told that the British armour could not proceed without infantry.

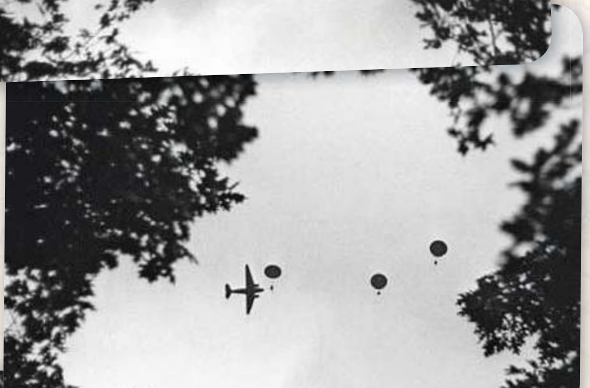
Other Americans were dumfounded with what they saw as British indifference to the fate of the men at Arnhem. One of the 82nd Airborne's officers, Captain T. Moffat Buriss, later recounted the following remarkable testimony: "It was beginning to get dark. As we looked at the south end of the bridge we saw silhouettes of tanks heading across in our direction ... Two tanks passed within feet of us. They were British ... I said, 'Let's go on to Arnhem and save the paratroopers there'.

"We could hear firing in the vicinity of the two lead tanks [then] the lead British tank was knocked out by a German 88. The remaining four tanks backed up to the north end of the bridge. That's when the British tank crews got out their teapots. I was furious. I charged to the front of the tank line where I found the British commander Captain Peter Carrington of the Grenadier Guards. 'Why are you stopping?' I asked him. 'I can't proceed,' he said crisply. 'That gun will knock out my tanks.' ... 'We'll go with you. We can knock out that gun.' ... 'I can't go without orders,' he said. 'OK,' I

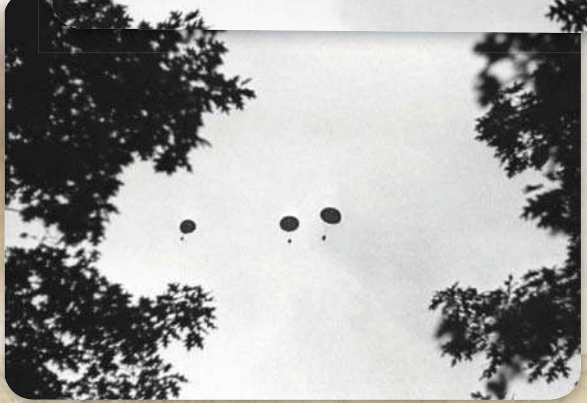


BELOW: **One of the collapsible boats used by the men of the 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment to row across the Waal at Nijmegen on display in the National Liberation Museum 1944-1945 at Groesbeek.** (HMP)

TOP BELOW RIGHT: **The first in a series of photographs showing Dakotas during a resupply drop over Arnhem.** (BUNDESARCHIV, BILD 101II-M2KBK-772-16/HÖPPNER/ CC-BY-SA)



MIDDLE BELOW RIGHT: **Parachutes open as the panniers and containers begin their descent.** (BUNDESARCHIV, BILD 101II-M2KBK-772-18/HÖPPNER/ CC-BY-SA)



BOTTOM BELOW RIGHT: **It is not known whether the supplies seen here were gathered up by their intended recipients.** (BUNDESARCHIV, BILD 101II-M2KBK-772-19/HÖPPNER/

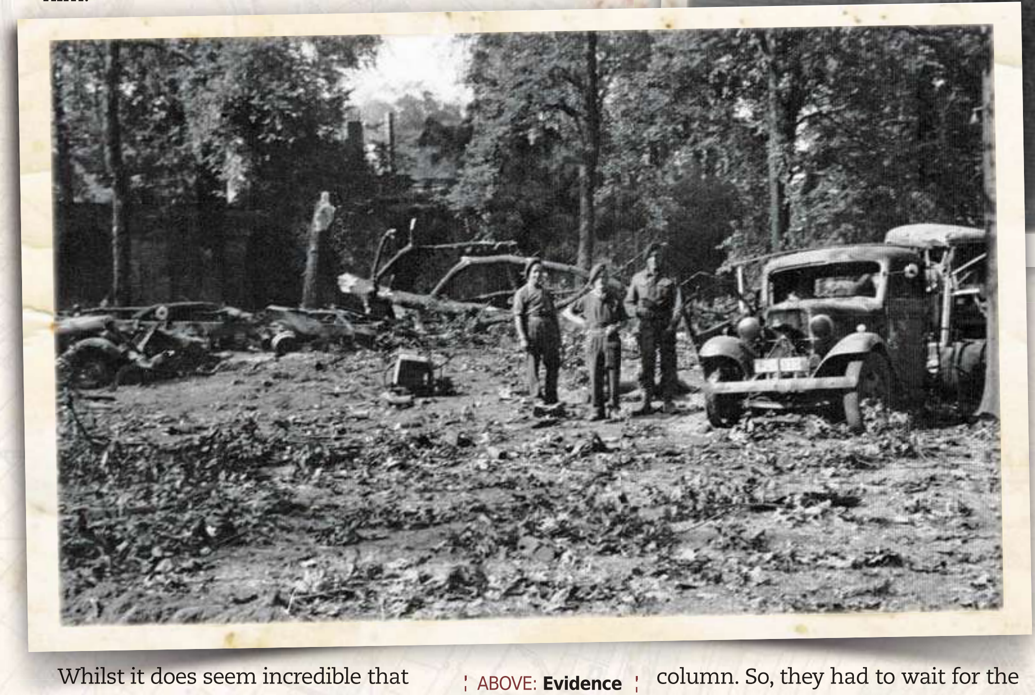
said, 'I'm giving you orders.'

"He was a British captain. I was an American captain. He wasn't about to recognise my authority ... 'You mean to tell me you're going to sit here on your ass while your own British paratroopers are being cut to shreds – and all because of one gun?'

"He shook his head. 'I can't go on without orders.' I looked him straight in the eye. 'You yellow-bellied son of a bitch. I've just sacrificed half of my company in the face of a dozen guns and you won't move because of one gun.'

"Then I cocked my tommy gun, put it to his head and said, 'You get this tank moving or I'll blow your damn head off.' With that he ducked into his tank and locked the latch. I couldn't get to him."[10]

RIGHT: **Taken from an upstairs window, this image reputedly shows the last German soldier leaving Nijmegen – note the Dutch woman across the road standing outside her house watching his departure! This is one of a series of images from the Tim Pruyn Collection and which were passed to him by his grandparents, Henk and Maria Pruyn, who lived in Nijmegen during the war.** (COURTESY OF THE TIM PRUYN COLLECTION)



ABOVE: **Evidence of the bitter fighting in Nijmegen pictured after the city's liberation.** (COURTESY OF THE TIM PRUYN COLLECTION)

Whilst it does seem incredible that there was no effort made to charge on towards Arnhem, there were a number of mitigating factors. The Grenadier and Irish Guards Groups were still fighting with pockets of enemy troops in Nijmegen. The Coldstream Guards Group was deployed covering the right flank of the 82nd Airborne Division which was coming under ever-stronger attack from the Reichswald. The Welsh Guards Group, for its part, was defending the bridge over the River Maas at Grave which could not be allowed to fall into enemy hands.

The road up to Arnhem was, furthermore, unsuitable for armour. It was flat and featureless with marshy ground and ditches on either side. This meant that the tanks could only travel in single file, and would have been highly vulnerable to well-sited anti-tank guns. It would only take one disabled tank to hold up the entire column. So, they had to wait for the infantry who were slogging up the single, congested road to Nijmegen.

Astonishingly, Horrocks was not simply untroubled at his men not advancing towards Arnhem, he actually wrote that with the capture of the Nijmegen bridge he went to bed "a happy man".[11]

## OOSTERBEEK AND ARNHEM

The Oosterbeek perimeter was under almost continual German bombardment. Enemy snipers picked off anyone who exposed themselves. All the houses occupied by the British troops had been damaged. There was little food or water and casualties were everywhere.

A few miles further east in Arnhem, at 18.00 hours the 2nd Parachute Battalion lost its grip of the northern end of the road bridge and the men hung on in just a few buildings. In the evening, Major Freddy Gough, who had taken over from the wounded Frost, sought a ceasefire to enable the wounded to be evacuated. The building they were in had caught fire several times and there was a real danger of the men being burnt to death. The Germans agreed. The stretcher cases were moved to hospital and the walking wounded were taken away into captivity.

John Frost was amongst the stretcher cases: "All our buildings were burning fiercely and, as I watched, the old Battalion Headquarters collapsed into a heap of smouldering rubble. The whole scene was brilliantly lit up by the flames. Both sides laboured together to bring the wounded out and I saw that the Germans were driving off in our jeeps full of bandaged men."[12]

## NOTES

1. Martin Middlebrook, *op. cit.*, p. 326.
2. Quoted in Hilary St. George Saunders, *The Red Beret, The Story of the Parachute Regiment 1940-1945* (Michael Joseph, London, 1950), p.255.
3. Martin Middlebrook, *op. cit.*, p.332.
4. *Ibid*, p.334.
5. Quoted in Alexander Junier and Bart Smulders, *By Land, Sea and Air, An Illustrated History of the 2nd Battalion, The Staffordshire Regiment 1940-1945* (Sigmond Publishing, Renkum, 2003) pp.130-1.
6. Supplement to *The London Gazette* No.36807, pp.5375-6.
7. Alan Wood, *op. cit.*, p.307.
8. P. Nordyke, *All American, All the Way* (Zenith Press, 2005), p.539.
9. Peter Harclerode, *Arnhem, A Tragedy of Errors*, (Caxton, London, 2000), pp.112-9.
10. Peter Carrington, later British Foreign Secretary and then Secretary General of NATO, denied this conversation. Tony and Valmai Holt, *op. cit.*, pp.178-9.
11. Horrocks, *op. cit.*, p.221.
12. John Frost, *op. cit.*, p.231.

# D+4 THURSDAY. 21 SEPTEMBER
# LAST ENDEAVOURS AT ARNHEM

**DURING THE night of 20/21st the 9th Panzer Division was re-organised for the renewal of its assault upon Oosterbeek where there were slightly more than 3,000 soldiers and approximately 2,500 civilians trapped within the perimeter.**

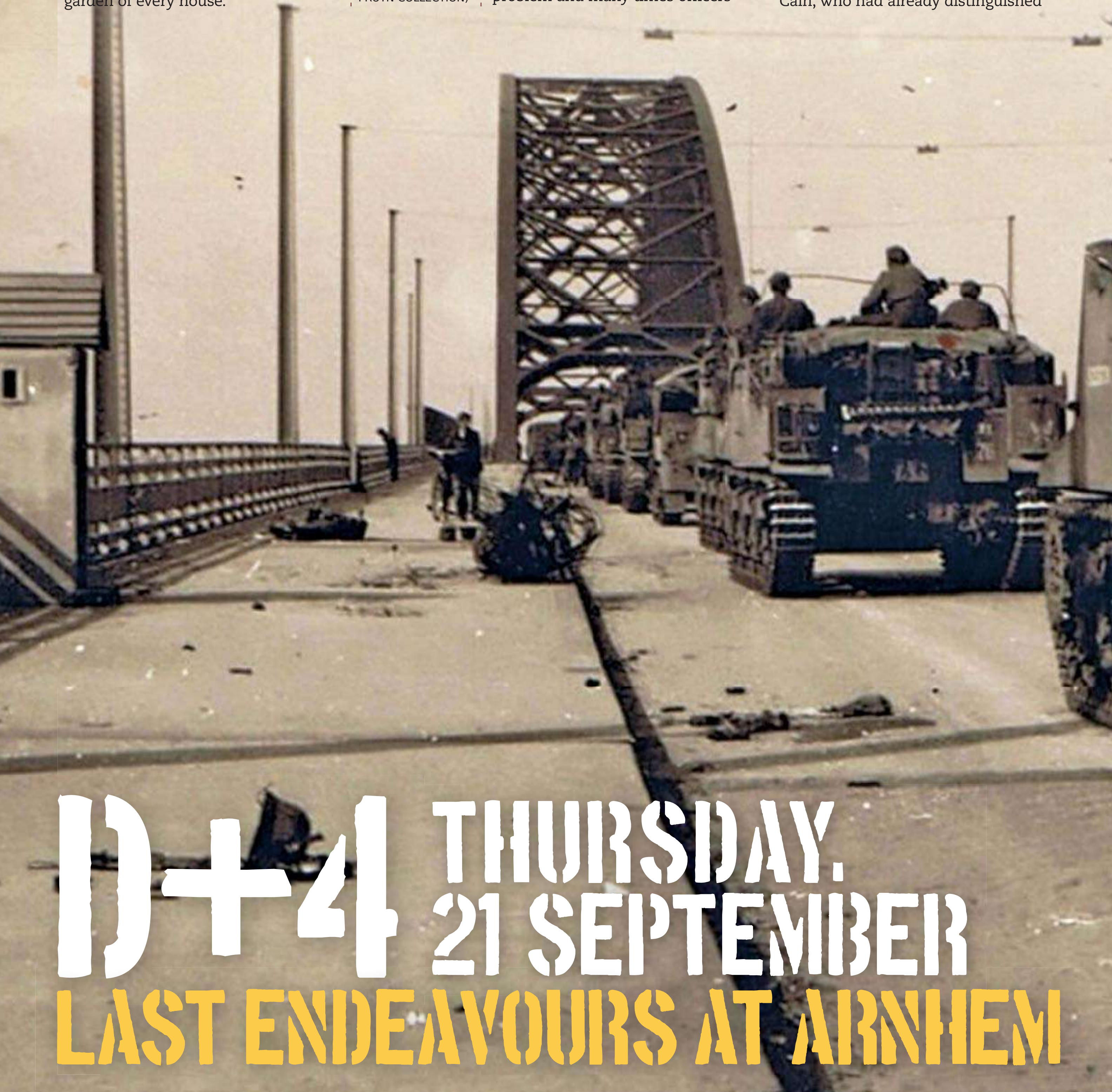
Despite this reorganisation the Germans failed to make much impression upon the perimeter. The paratroopers withstood the close-range shelling from the assault guns and mortars, fighting with the enemy troops for every room and every garden of every house.

"The day was spent mainly under continuous mortar fire," remembered Private J. Looker who was helping to hold the northern perimeter with others of the 1st Airlanding Brigade. "A number of bombs exploded already in the air because they hit the trees. As a result artillery fragments burst in the air and this caused many casualties. We were also unfortunate to lose all our spare ammunition and equipment when the platoon handcart took a direct hit."[1]

Snipers were also a constant problem and many times officers led small parties beyond the safety of the buildings in attempts to winkle them out. If the self-propelled guns came close to a building they were immediately attacked. The stubborn British resistance limited the German advance to barely 200 yards.[2]

## TANK KILLER

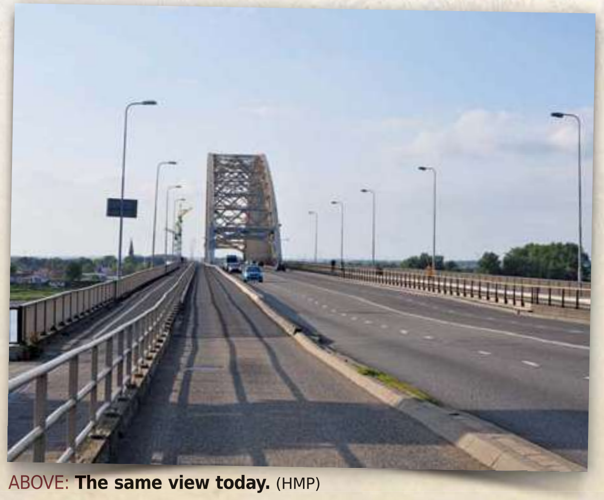
One of those who battled the German armour at Oosterbeek on the morning of the 21st was Major Robert Cain, the OC of 'B' Company, 2nd Battalion the South Staffordshire Regiment. Cain, who had already distinguished



MAIN PICTURE: **The advance from Nijmegen underway on 21 September 1944. This picture, taken at about 14.00 hours that day, shows the Sexton 25-pounder guns of the 153rd Field Regiment RA crossing the road bridge to head north towards Arnhem.** (TIM PRUYN COLLECTION) himself, saw two Sturmgeschütz III assault guns approach the South Staffs' position. Armed with a PIAT Cain lay in wait in a slit trench while Lieutenant Ian Meikle of the Light Regiment gave him bearings from a house above him. The StuG III fired at the house and killed Meikle, while the chimney collapsed and almost fell on top of Cain.

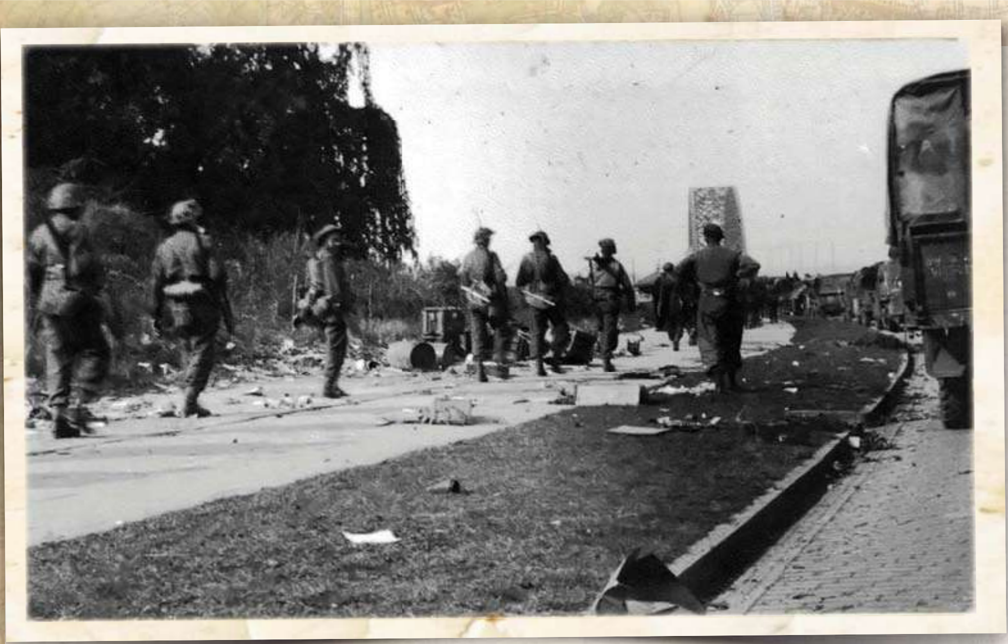
Though wounded, Cain held his position until the enemy assault gun was 100 yards away, then he fired. The StuG immediately returned fire with its machine-gun and wounded Cain, who took refuge in a nearby shed from where he fired another PIAT round, which exploded beneath the assault gun and disabled it. The crew abandoned the vehicle but all were gunned down.

Cain fired at the second StuG, but the PIAT round was faulty and exploded directly in front of him. It blew him off his feet and left him blind with metal fragments in his blackened face. One of the Light Regiment's guns was manhandled forward and, opening fire, disabled the enemy. By the end of the Battle of Arnhem, Cain's exploits (there were more to come) had become the stuff of legend.[3]



ABOVE: **The same view today.** (HMP)

**For two days the 1st Independent Polish Parachute Brigade had waited in anxious frustration for the weather to improve over the United Kingdom. On Thursday, 21 September the skies cleared and the Poles were finally given the news that they were off to join the 1st Airborne Division. Maybe, just maybe, they could help Urquhart's men hold on until XXX Corps arrived.**



ABOVE: **Men and vehicles of the Irish Guards Group head through Hunnerpark towards Nijmegen Bridge on the 21st, passing the debris of the previous day's battle.** (TIM PRUYN COLLECTION)

## XXX CORPS

Horrocks continued to seem quite unperturbed with the lack of movement of his Second Army. This has been the subject of much controversy since that time. The Americans have made much of the apparent lack of interest in pushing onto Arnhem, one account stating that there were, "virtually no German troops between Nijmegen and Arnhem. Nor were there for around sixteen hours, until the Germans were able to push armour over the Arnhem Bridge after finally overwhelming the British force clinging to the north end at midday on 21 September. The delay at Nijmegen handed the initiative to the Germans and allowed them once again to erect an effective defence where none had existed in time to counter Guards Armoured's leisurely advance."

In their defence Horrocks wrote: "The 101st U.S. Division guarding our life-line was being subjected daily to increasing pressure from both sides. Hardly a day passed without some fresh German formation making its appearance against us. No wonder, therefore, that on the next day, 21st September, the Guards Armoured Division failed to advance more than two miles north. For once, air co-operation was working badly, and though the Typhoons were overhead, the contact-car could not get in touch with them. This was particularly unfortunate because very little artillery support was available."[4]

One of the Welsh Guards was Andrew Gibson-Watt, who explained the situation in more detail: "My own complaint is the thesis … that the Guards Armoured Division should have gone onto Arnhem on the night they captured the Nijmegen bridge. The Division 'off balance' and still heavily embroiled in Nijmegen town, could not have done so. There was nothing to go on with: the main preoccupation was now to defend the bridge against the expected counter-attack. Any elements which had gone on would have found it very hard to get over the Arnhem bridge which was not (and never had been) held by John Frost's gallant force; and if it had got over it would have been met by the greatly superior German forces in that part of Arnhem.

"An advance that night was 'not on' and general military historians have erred greatly in assuming that it would have been possible and should have been done. We have always been fed the story about fired up American paratroopers railing at the British tankers for not going straight on … It is time for this accusation which does not stand up to detailed examination, to be finally refuted."[5] How justified Gibson-Watt was in making this statement will be examined in due course.

## THIS BLOODY ROAD

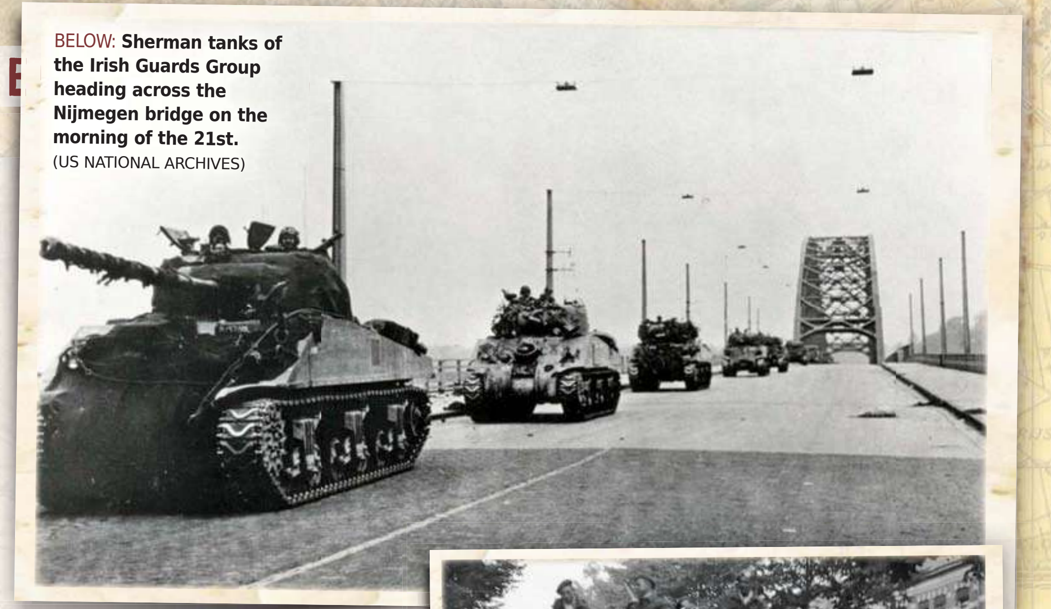
On the morning of the 21st Lieutenant Colonel Vandeleur was told that his tanks had to be rolling towards Arnhem at 11.00 hours. Leading the advance would be Captain Roland Langton of the Irish Guards. He was told that two tanks would carry soldiers, with more tanks and troops following. There would not be much in the way of artillery support and the Typhoons had been grounded by bad weather. The road they had to take was along an embankment with deep ditches on both sides surrounded by low-lying country broken by dykes and orchards. It was known as the *Betuwe*, or Island, because the ground around it was so waterlogged. It has been described as perfect defensive country as the German 88mm guns could be concealed whilst the tanks on the embankment would be silhouetted against the sky-line. The Guards were not happy at the prospect of travelling down the road, and Major Desmond FitzGerald voiced the concern of the officers to Vandeleur. "Sir, we're not going to get a yard up this bloody road." Vandeleur agreed. Nevertheless, he replied: "We've got to try. We've got to chance that bloody road."

The Irish Guards reached the village of Elst, just six miles from Arnhem, without incident. Then the column suddenly halted – all four leading tanks were hit and set on fire. The Guards were unable to move the tanks out of the way because of the narrowness of the road and the depth and steepness of the ditches. Neither were they able to deal with the hastily prepared German defensive position organised around six Panzer IVs from the 2nd Battalion, SS Panzer Regiment 10. These tanks had been ferried across the Pannerden Canal, east of Arnhem, on the night of 19/20 by German pioneers. The Guards simply had to wait for the infantry of the 43rd (Wessex) Division to reach them. The beleaguered men at Arnhem and Oosterbeek would receive no help from XXX Corps that day.

ABOVE: **The flow of traffic crossing the Nijmegen Bridge today is such that much difficulty was experienced in trying to obtain an exact modern-day comparison. The tower in Hunnerpark is out of view to the left.** (HMP)

## THE ARTILLERY

There was some help, and therefore some hope that salvation might yet be at hand, when the 1st Airlanding Light Regiment, Royal Artillery finally made radio contact with the artillery of the Second Army. The guns of XXX Corps were within range of Arnhem and the gunners asked for co-ordinates for targets. Hackett and Hicks, whom Urquhart had divided responsibility for the defence of the perimeter, were asked for this information on the targets of their choice. When these had been transmitted, the 5.5-inch



BELOW: **Sherman tanks of the Irish Guards Group heading across the Nijmegen bridge on the morning of the 21st.** (US NATIONAL ARCHIVES)

guns of XXX Corps’ 64th Medium Regiment RA opened fire.

“Thus started one of the most exciting and remarkable artillery shoots I have ever experienced,” wrote Urquhart. “From a range of about eleven miles, these gunners proceeded to answer our calls with a series of shoots on targets nominated by [Lieutenant Colonel Robert] Loder-Symonds, some of which were no more than a hundred yards out from our perimeter line. It involved certain risks, but the situation merited their being taken, and in the afternoon the shelling had had a quite noticeable effect on the Germans.

“Hearing the whine and the tremendous blast of these medium shells – there is surely no more terrifying noise in war – we felt glad the 64th were on our side. And now, supported by a battery of heavies, these gunners broke up several [German] attacks supported by self-propelled guns on the eastern flank.”[6]

## RE-SUPPLY MISSION

Widespread fog and low cloud in the early hours (extending from about 150 feet to 9,000 feet) began to clear in the south-west of England by mid-morning and at 11.00 hours, with visibility increased to three miles, most airfields of 38 Group and 46 Group were declared fit for flying. A total of 117 aircraft from RAF Transport Command, made up of sixty-four Stirlings and fifty-three Dakotas, were duly earmarked for another re-supply attempt.

The situation on the ground was becoming desperate with the troops running out of water and many of the men having nothing more to eat than a sardine and a few biscuits. The Oosterbeek perimeter had shrunk to cover around one square mile, and it was into that small area that the supplies would have to be dropped. The RAF had received details of a new drop point but this was only 200 yards from the previous day’s location.

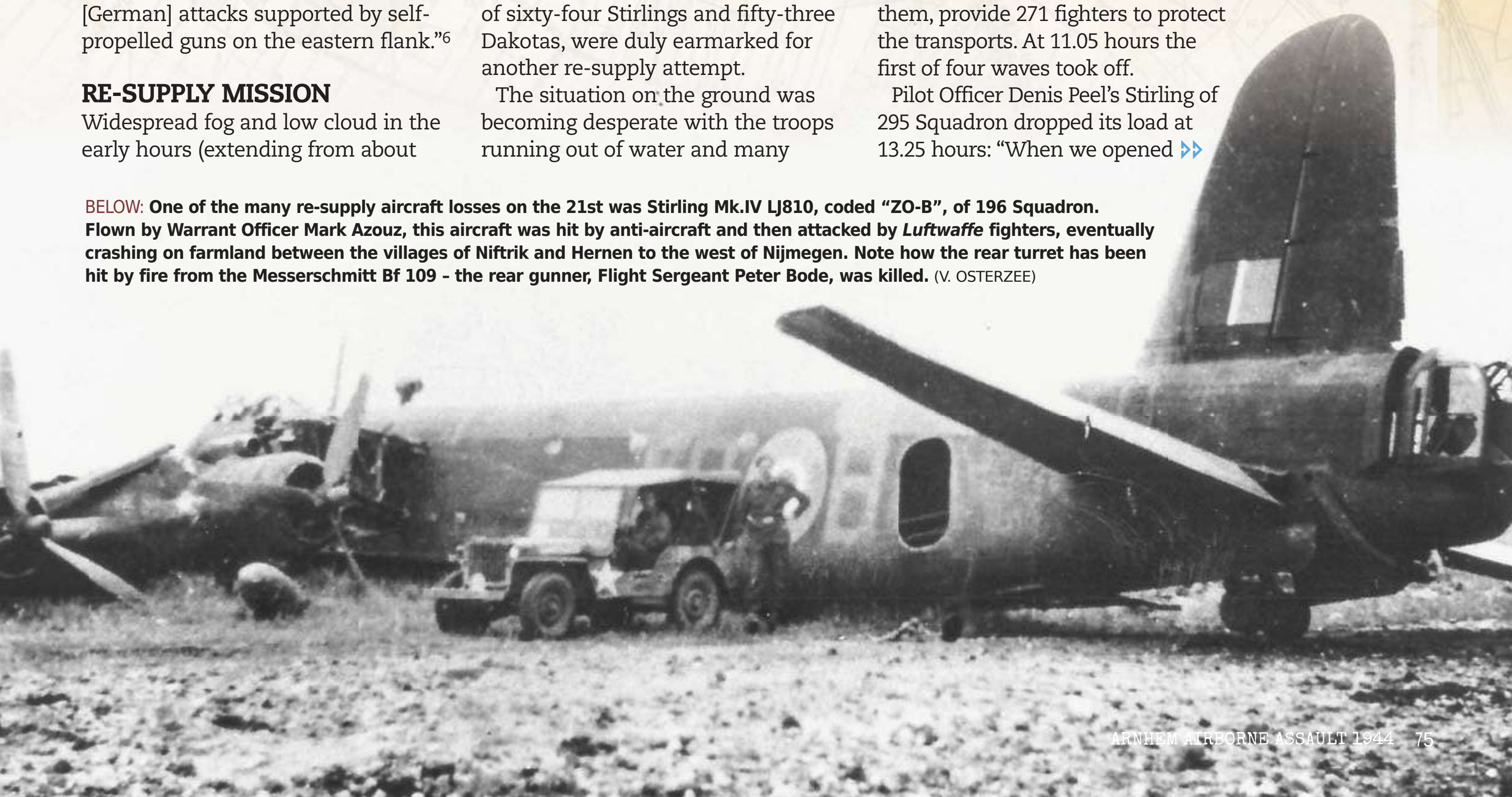
The pilots were warned that German fighters as well as anti-aircraft fire might be encountered and so 11 Group Air Defence of Great Britain (in effect the old Fighter Command) and the USAAF’s 8th Fighter Command would, between them, provide 271 fighters to protect the transports. At 11.05 hours the first of four waves took off.

Pilot Officer Denis Peel’s Stirling of 295 Squadron dropped its load at 13.25 hours: “When we opened

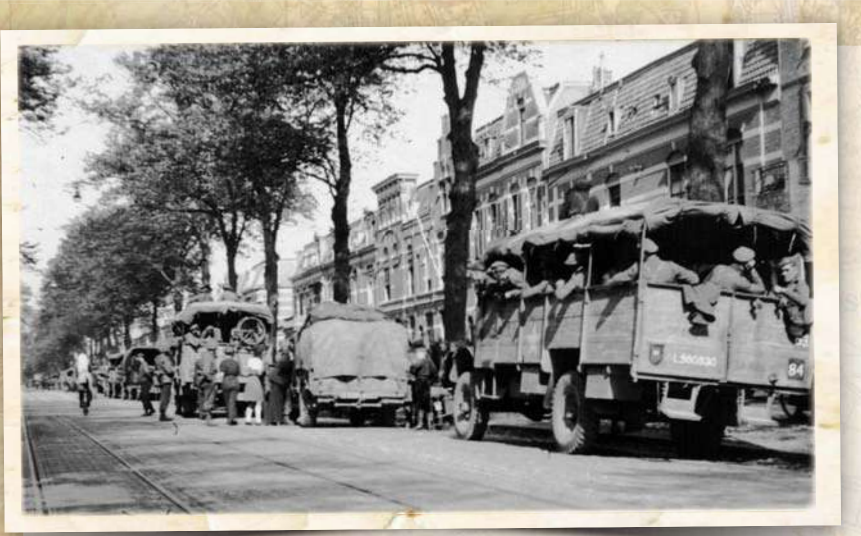
▷▷

ABOVE: **Another view of Sexton 25-pounder self-propelled guns of the 153rd Field Regiment (Leicestershire Yeomanry) RA making their way through Nijmegen towards the bridge.** (TIM PRUYN COLLECTION)

LEFT: **A 5.5-inch howitzer is towed through Nijmegen as XXX Corps pushes on.** (TIM PRUYN COLLECTION)



BELOW: **One of the many re-supply aircraft losses on the 21st was Stirling Mk.IV LJ810, coded “ZO-B”, of 196 Squadron. Flown by Warrant Officer Mark Azouz, this aircraft was hit by anti-aircraft and then attacked by *Luftwaffe* fighters, eventually crashing on farmland between the villages of Niftrik and Hernen to the west of Nijmegen. Note how the rear turret has been hit by fire from the Messerschmitt Bf 109 – the rear gunner, Flight Sergeant Peter Bode, was killed.** (V. OSTERZEE)



LEFT: **Troops and equipment from the Guards Armoured Division waiting for the order to move out from Nijmegen. The divisional sign of the Guards Armoured Division is visible on the rear of the right-hand lorry - the Division retained its famous badge, the "ever open eye", from the First World War.** (TIM PRUYN COLLECTION)

the bomb doors and the aperture to drop out the panniers, we were at about seven or eight hundred feet and as slow as possible. We then realised we were being shot at and our starboard inner engine was on fire. I was told the fuselage was on fire and the despatchers had jumped out to avoid the flames." Peel had no choice but to put his aircraft down as quickly as possible. This he managed to do and his crew climbed safely out, but straight into the arms of the enemy. Peel's aircraft was one of thirty-five that failed to return to base.

A total of 273 tons of supplies were dropped, of which only eleven tons were officially recorded as recovered by the Airborne troops. This represented just 4%. However, it is thought that some containers might have been collected which divisional HQ was unaware of.[7]

## THE POLES ARRIVE

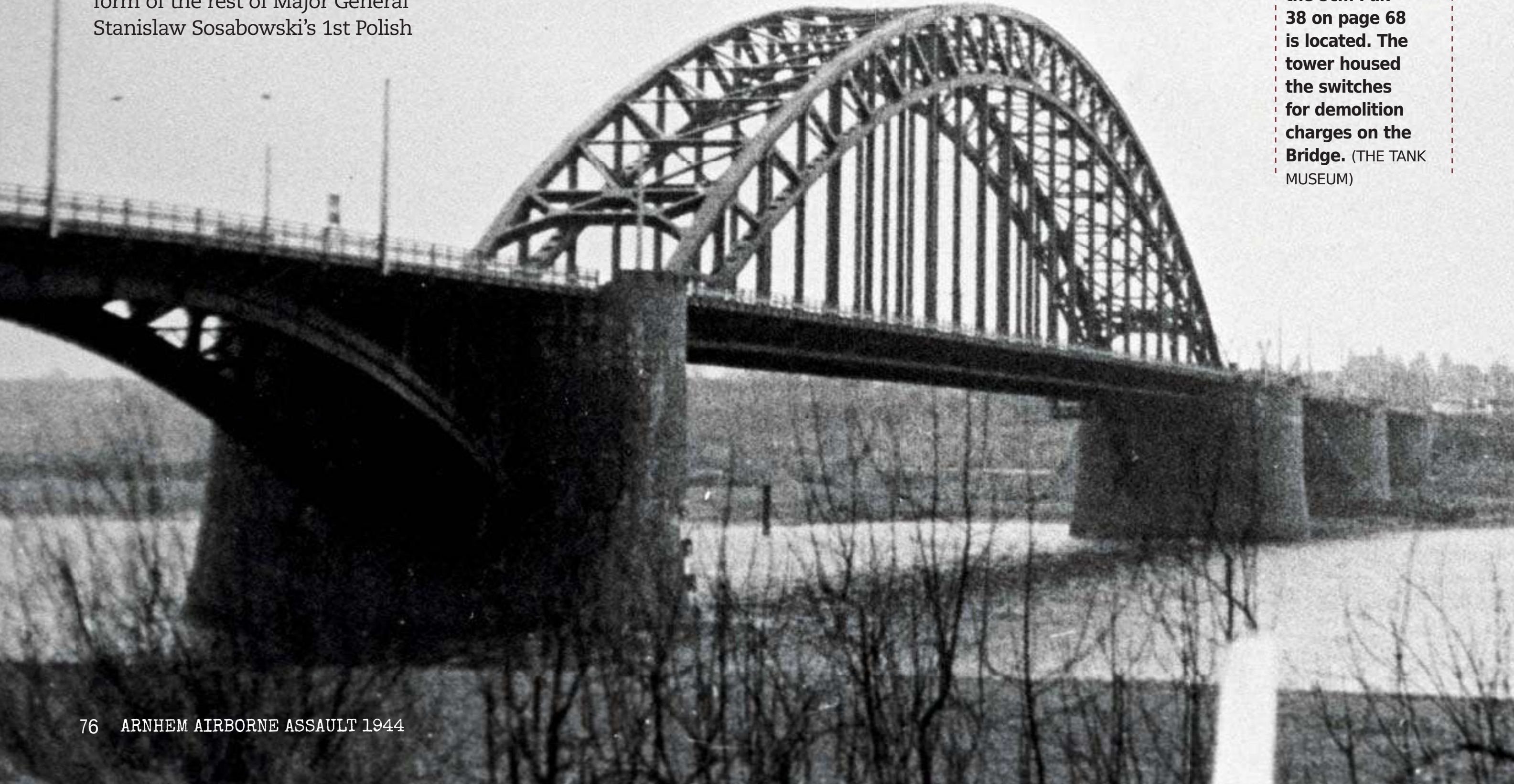
Further help was on its way in the form of the rest of Major General Stanislaw Sosabowski's 1st Polish Independent Brigade Group. One hour after the last re-supply Dakota had taken off, 114 US Dakotas took off from Spanhoe and Saltby in Lincolnshire. Unfortunately heavy cloud closed in and all the aircraft were recalled. The signal, though, was either not received or not understood by all of the aircraft, and seventy-two of them continued on to Holland. The fighter cover, to be provided by the P-51 Mustangs of the US 359th Fighter Group, was also recalled.

The original planned drop zone was south of the road bridge, next to the road to Nijmegen, but on the 20th, with the news from Urquhart that the Heveadorp ferry was in British hands, the drop was moved westwards near to Driel, a small town on the southern side of the Lower Rhine on the road to the ferry. Luckily, having no fighter escort, the Dakotas were not spotted by any enemy aircraft and all seventy-two reached Driel.

"All around me, as far as the eye could see, other paratroopers were descending," recalled Sosabowski. "Looking up, I saw with horror a Dakota, with flames pouring from both engines: yet I noticed too that the 'plane kept on a steady course and paratroopers still came in order out of the door. The rattle of machine-guns grew louder as the thunder of the 'planes died away."

The response from the Germans had been immediate. "When we saw fresh paratroopers landing we lined up along the Rhine's edge and shot for all we were worth," explained SS-Corporal Rudolf Tapp of the 3 *Kampfgruppe* Panzer Grenadier Regiment. "I set up my machine gun and fired long protracted bursts because there is so

LEFT: **A British gunner poses for the camera during the fighting at Nijmegen.** (TIM PRUYN COLLECTION)



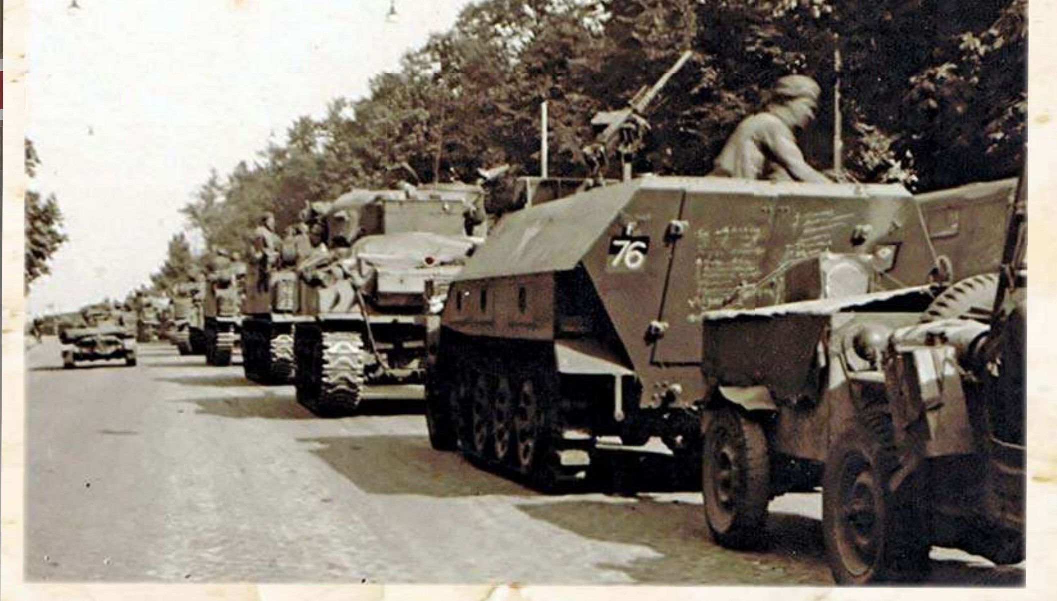
BELOW: **A photograph of Nijmegen Bridge taken soon after its capture. This is the view from the north bank, looking towards the direction from which XXX Corps advanced. How much the area has been developed since the war is evident in this picture. The tower in the background still exists in the city's Hunnerpark, and indeed it is in front of this structure that the 5cm Pak 38 on page 68 is located. The tower housed the switches for demolition charges on the Bridge.** (THE TANK MUSEUM) little time before they all get to the ground. This was a shock – a second front! We thought they would likely head for the bridge and try to cross the river, so we stood under the trees and fired up into the air."

The Germans were indeed worried with this development. If the Poles could reinforce the British at Oosterbeek, a permanent crossing might be established that the British troops pushing up from Nijmegen could exploit. SS-Colonel Hans-Michael Lippert, who was in charge of the SS *Unteroffizierschule* (SS Non-commissioned officer school) in Arnhem and now in command of forces on the north bank, was also deeply concerned: "This was, so far as achieving my mission went, one of the most critical situations that ever arose. Driel lay only a few kilometres south of the Heveadorp-Rhine ferry, not yet in our possession. It appeared to indicate the likelihood that the Poles would be over the ferry as quickly as they were able to assist the surrounded Englishmen in the pocket."[8]

Some parts of the drop zone were covered by a crossfire from the railway embankment but the Poles laid down a smoke screen with their mortars and, under its cover, began to sort themselves out. A total of 998 paratroopers hit the ground. His headquarters established, Sosabowski then tried to make radio contact with Urquhart but was greeted only with silence. The Poles had no idea what they had dropped into. Were all the British dead?

## FINAL MOMENTS AT ARNHEM

Neither the Poles nor XXX Corps could save the 2nd Parachute Battalion. The truce of the previous day had obviously been necessary to save the wounded men, but the Germans had taken advantage of the cease-fire to move deeper into buildings at the north end of the bridge.



ABOVE: **Tanks and vehicles of the Guards Armoured Division queue up whilst waiting to cross the bridge at Nijmegen. The second vehicle from the right is a captured *Sd.Kfz. 251* (Sonderkraftfahrzeug 251) half-track being used as an OP (observation) vehicle by the 153rd Field Regiment (Leicestershire Yeomanry) RA. It replaced a vehicle the unit lost in August 1944. Note the "76" Arm of Service sign (which would be on a red-over-blue square indicating Royal Artillery) on the left side of the hull. Just above it is the battery marking. The divisional sign of the Guards Armoured is visible to the right of the door.** (TIM PRUYN COLLECTION)

GEEN CIGARE

BOTH ABOVE: **Two tanks pictured at Nijmegen whilst the bridge and surrounding area was secured and XXX Corps' advance could resume - a Sherman at the top; a Cromwell on the bottom.** (TIM PRUYN COLLECTION)

RIGHT: **A German MG 42 machine-gun being set up for use in an anti-aircraft role in the Arnhem-Oosterbeek area.** (BUNDESARCHIV, BILD 101I-590-2335-05/ZIMMERMANN/ CC-BY-SA)

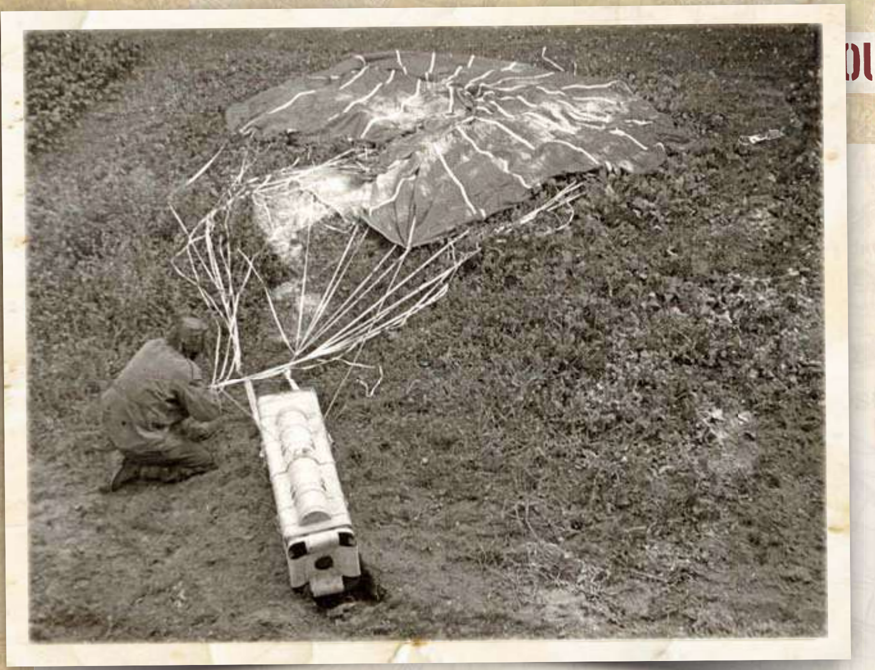
"It was a nightmare," Gough explained. "Everywhere you turned there were Germans – in front, in back and on the sides. They had managed to infiltrate a large force into the area during the truce. They now held practically every house. We were literally overrun."[9]

Gough told his men to hide out as best they could during the night of the 20th, hoping if they could stay where they were until morning the tanks would be rumbling up from Nijmegen. Morning came on the 21st, but not XXX Corps. There were now fewer than 250 airborne men left able to fight and when the Germans attacked they overran the little groups of paratroopers who, with no ammunition left, were compelled to surrender. Some tried to escape in ones or two, but the Germans could see them clearly and most were easily captured. Amongst those was Freddy Gough who was caught trying to hide out under a pile of wood.

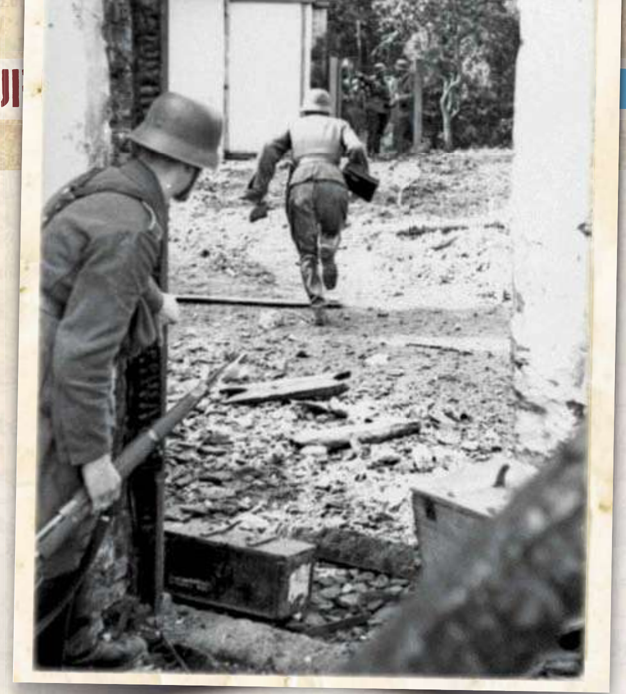
A final message over one of the battalion's ineffectual radios was heard only by the Germans: "Out of ammunition. God save the King."

## THE HEVEADORP FERRY

It was understood from Urquhart's message that the Heveadorp Ferry was under British control and Sosabowski had been ordered to secure the southern bank of the Rhine opposite Oosterbeek so that his troops could be ferried across to join the 1st Airborne Division. If the ferry was no longer in British hands, the Poles were supposed to capture and hold it. As soon as he was able, therefore, Sosabowski sent a strong reconnaissance force to look for the ferry. By this time it was already dark. ▷▷



TOP LEFT: **An airborne soldier detaches a parachute from a container dropped by one of the Stirlings (Dakotas only dropped wicker panniers) at Arnhem on 21 September 1944. This is an F-Type container which was designed to carry special equipment such as radios. It is stated that this image may well have been taken by Sergeant Mike Lewis of the Army Film and Photographic Unit from an upstairs window of No.17 Van Lennepweg.** (HMP)



TOP RIGHT: **German troops fighting amongst the ruins of Oosterbeek or Arnhem during Operation *Market Garden*.** (BUNDESARCHIV, BILD 101I-590-2333-30/APPE[ARPPE]/CC-BY-SA)

The rest of the Poles followed and soon Sosabowski learned that the ferry was not just unavailable but had been destroyed. This had not been anticipated. The Polish general set up his headquarters in a deserted farmhouse to consider his next move. He had just 750 men with him.

As he was discussing this with his staff, a man staggered through the door. He was dripping with water, spattered with mud and clad only in underpants with a camouflage net around his face. *Kapitan* Ludwik Zwolanski had arrived with the first Polish drop two days earlier and was acting as Urquhart's Polish Liaison Officer. Urquhart had asked him to swim across the Rhine to make contact with Sosabowski.

ABOVE LEFT: **The stretch of the Lower Rhine at Driel as seen from the southern bank.** (COURTESY OF MICHIEL VER BEEK)

"The ferry is in German hands – probably destroyed," reported Zwolanski. "General Urquhart demands a speedy crossing – this will be done on rafts supplied by the 1st Airborne Division ... The British will launch a counterattack to secure the northern bank to allow the Polish Brigade to cross, after which the Poles will take over a section of the division's defensive perimeter."

With this news Sosabowski called his senior officers together to discuss the possible crossing which would take place at Driel. Meanwhile, the Germans had observed the stationary Poles on the south bank waiting for Sosabowski's orders and they brought up artillery and mortars. Illuminating the area with flares, the Germans began bombarding the static Polish units.

Sosabowski had in fact been misled about the rafts as they had yet to be built. The British engineers had hoped to have been able to convert ammunition trailers for the task, but this proved impractical.

Nevertheless, at 01.00 hours an officer of the Royal Engineers paddled across the river on a small dinghy to re-affirm Zwolanski's promise. After delivering his message he paddled back, taking Zwolanski with him.

Believing that his men would soon be able to join the 1st Airborne Division, Sosabowski led his men on to Driel. Within thirty minutes they were on the march again. It was still dark when the Poles reached the town.

## THE END OF THE DAY

The western sector of the Oosterbeek perimeter was heavily assaulted during the afternoon, but the German attack was beaten off by the men of the Border Regiment, though at a heavy cost. At the same time the Germans had attacked a composite force consisting of men of the 1st, 3rd and 11th Parachute Battalions and the South Staffordshire Regiment, which, led by Major Dickie Lonsdale, was known now as Lonsdale Force.

At the northern end of the perimeter, the King's Own Scottish Borders were forced out of their positions but won them back in a bayonet charge. By nightfall the battalion was reduced to 150 men of all ranks.

The 10th Parachute Battalion, on the eastern side of the perimeter astride the main road through Oosterbeek, was attacked by tanks and self-propelled guns. The houses in which Lieutenant Colonel Ken Smyth (the battalion's CO) and his men were located were set on fire and they were forced to withdraw. Smyth himself was seriously wounded and the rest of his officers were killed.[10]

By the end of the day, the perimeter was roughly 1,000 yards wide by the Rhine, broadening to 1,200 to the north, and about 2,000 yards deep. It would clearly be some considerable time before the Poles could be transferred across the river.

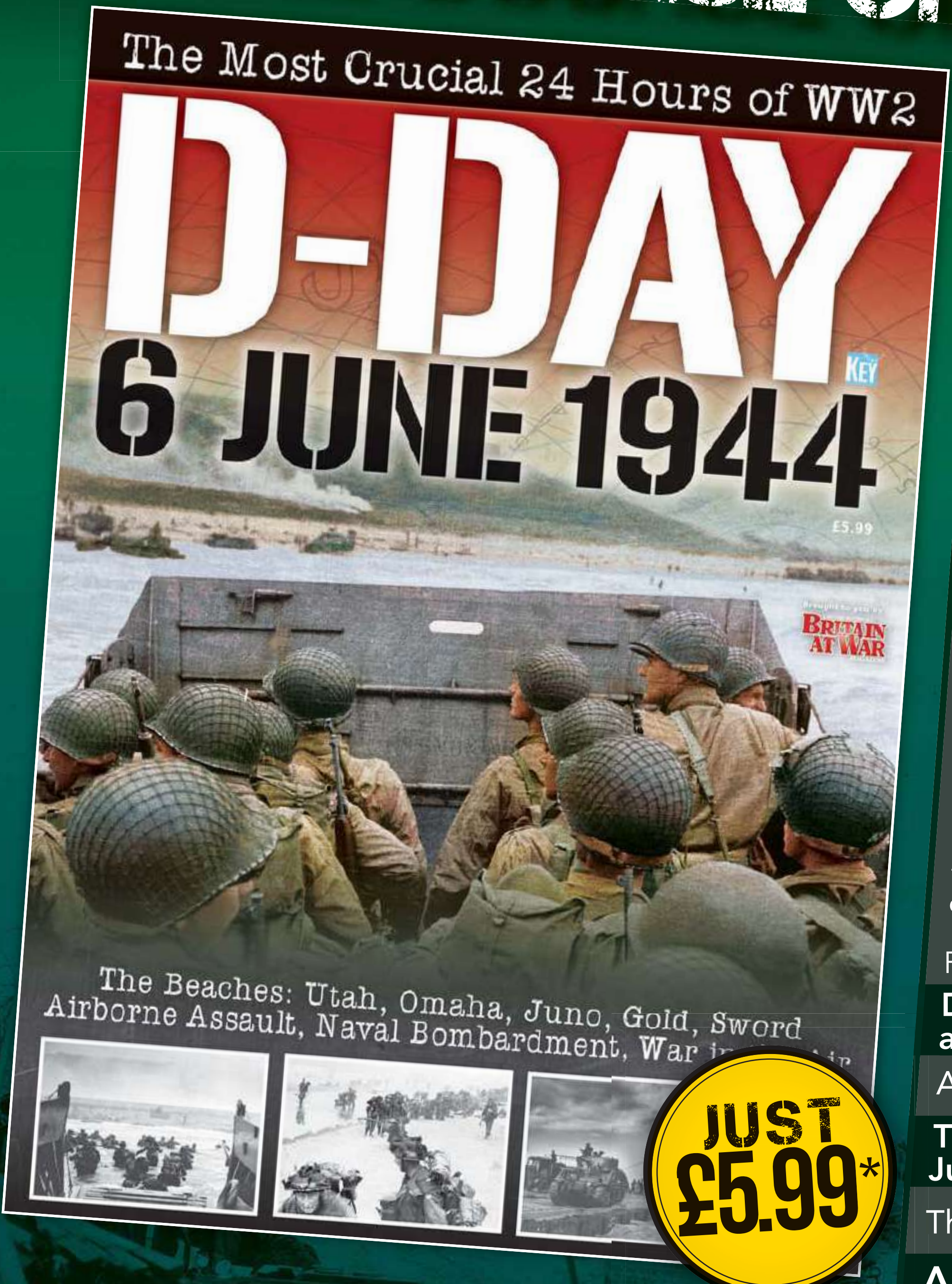
The situation was bleak and Urquhart reported this to Corps HQ: "No knowledge elements of Div in Arnhem for 24 hours. Balance of Div in very tight perimeter. Heavy mortaring and machinegun fire followed by local attacks. Main nuisance SP guns. Our casualties heavy. Resources stretched to utmost. Relief within 24 hours vital."

## NOTES

1. Van Teeseling, *op. cit.*, p.40.
2. William F. Buckingham, *Arnhem 1944* (Tempus, Stroud, 2004), p.206.
3. Supplement to *The London Gazette*, No.36807, pp.5375-6.
4. Horrocks, *op. cit.*, p.221.
5. Tim Lynch, *Operation Market Garden: The Legend of the Waal Crossing* (Spellmount, Stroud, 2011), p.152.
6. Urquhart, *op. cit.*, p.122.
7. All re-supply details can be found in Arie-Jan Vans Hees, *op. cit.*, p.p.188-255.
8. Robert Kershaw, *It Never Snows in September, The German View of Market-Garden and the Battle of Arnhem, September1944* (Ian Allan, Hersham, 2011), p.299.
9. Cornelius Ryan, *op. cit.*, p.221.
10. Peter Harclerode, *op. cit.*, p.125. Smyth is listed as succumbing to these wounds on 26 September 1944.

A BRITAIN AT WAR MAGAZINE SPECIAL

# 24 HOURS THAT CHANGED THE COURSE OF WW2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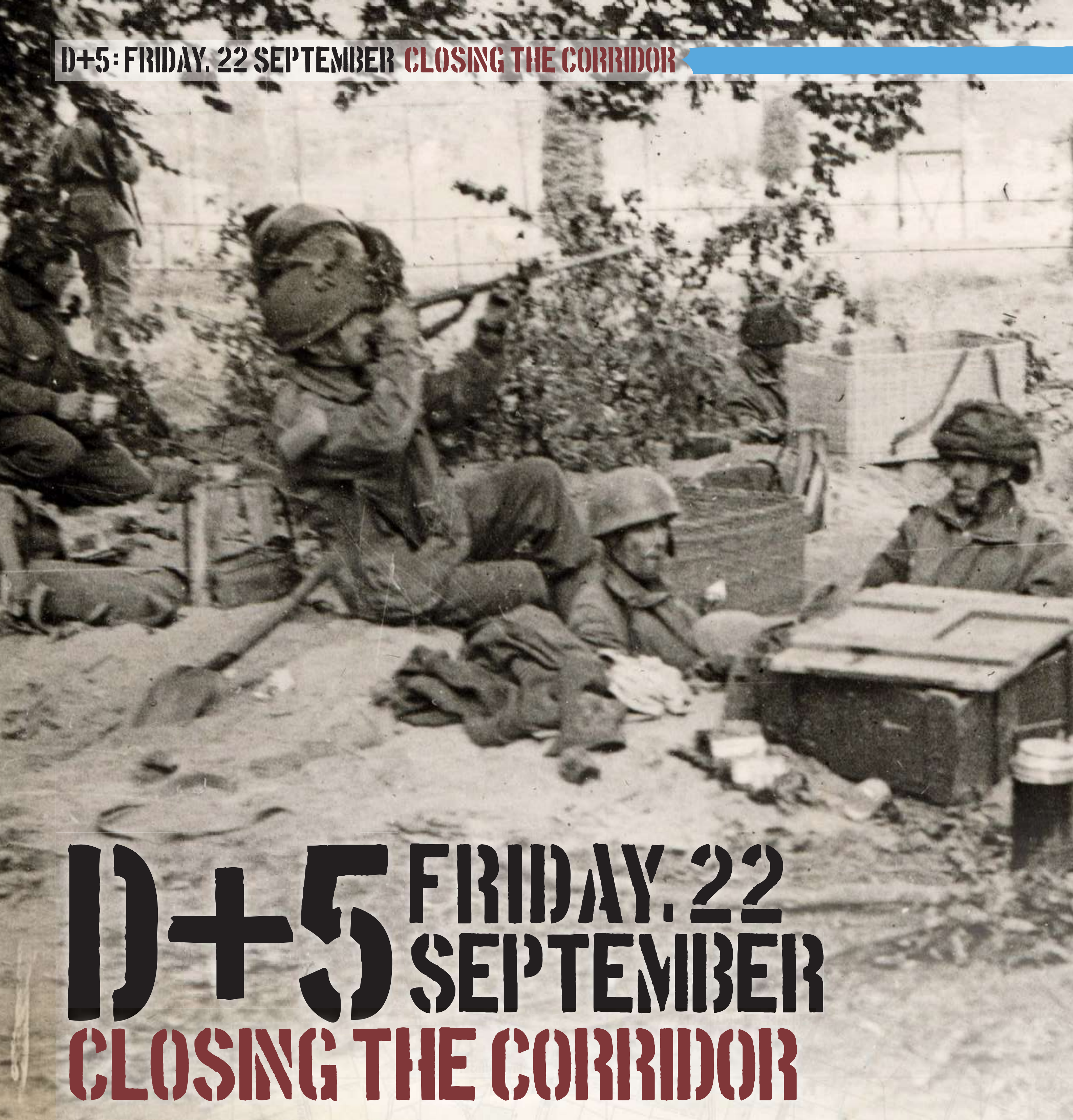


MAIN PICTURE: **Men of the 1st Airborne Divisional Workshops, the division's small Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers detachment, rest in the grounds of the Hartenstein Hotel during a brief respite in the bitter fighting on 22 September 1944. In the background is the tennis court where the PoWs were held.** (HMP)

# D+5 FRIDAY, 22 SEPTEMBER

# CLOSING THE CORRIDOR

**THE GROUND was covered in mist on the morning of the 22nd, and a number of armoured cars of the Household Cavalry were able to slip through the German lines and join up with the Poles at Driel. This enabled a reliable radio link to be established between Horrocks and Sosabowski. The 22nd also saw the infantry of the 43rd (Wessex) Division reach the front. Major General Ivor Thomas had been ordered to "take all risks" to effect the relief of the 1st Airborne Division.**

This was to be accomplished by one brigade advancing along both sides of the road on the embankment whilst a second brigade attacked further west through the town of Oosterhout to reach Driel.

## XXX CORPS

Not only had it taken the 43rd (Wessex) Division three days to cover the sixty miles to the front, when Brigadier Hubert Essame finally led 214 Brigade up to Elst to prepare for its attack upon the German positions, one of his units, the 7th Battalion the Somerset Light Infantry, was still struggling to force its way through the Nijmegen crowds and roadblocks. The result was that by the time his division was fully assembled it was broad daylight and, because no tanks could be brought up, the infantry was unsupported.

The Germans were on their guard following the actions of the Household Cavalry and the 7th Somersets soon ran into difficulty. A battalion-sized German battle group supported by tanks, self-propelled guns and mortars under Major Hans-Peter Knaust held a strong position which the 7th Somersets could make little impression upon. Twice

**Urquhart had made it quite clear that he could not hold out for more than twenty-four hours. This, then, would be the day when either XXX Corps would break through to Arnhem, or the British 1st Airborne Division would be wiped out.**

they attacked *Kampfgruppe* Knaust's positions and twice they were beaten back. A third attack was mounted at 15.20 hours, this time supported by the 43rd (Wessex) Division's artillery, and by 17.00 hours a gap had been punched in the enemy line.

Brigadier Essame was ready to exploit this breakthrough with a mobile column which he had been holding in reserve. This consisted of one squadron of Sherman tanks of the 4th/7th Dragoon Guards, the 5th Battalion Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry, and one machine-gun platoon of the 8th Battalion Middlesex Regiment. This force, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel George Taylor of the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry, included a number of DUKWs (amphibious trucks) to transport the troops across the Rhine to join up with the 1st Airborne Division.

Taylor divided his force into two. The first column was an armoured one with two companies of infantry riding on the outside of the tanks. In the rear column came the soft-skinned vehicles carrying the remainder of the infantry. They set off just before dusk and the head of the armoured column covered the ten miles to Driel in just thirty minutes where they met up with Sosabowski's Poles.

Without realising what was happening a German armoured formation, which was probing west from Elst with five tanks and a little infantry support, came in between the two halves of Taylor's column. Fortunately the Germans were spotted by the crew of a Bren gun carrier at the rear of the armoured column. The carrier rammed the leading tank bringing the Germans to a standstill and Company Sergeant-Major Philip killed the German tank commander as he looked out of his turret. ▷▷

On learning what was happening behind him, Taylor sent back two platoons of the 5th Battalion, The Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry armed with extra PIATs and some anti-tank mines. Operating in the dark, they knocked out two more of the tanks with their PIATs and two more were abandoned after running off the road and became stuck in the soft ground. One of the PIAT operators, Private Brown, spotted one of the tanks with its tracks damaged by one of the mines. He left the cover of the ditch where he was lying and walked in full view to within a few yards of the disabled tank before letting loose with his PIAT. The tank was completely destroyed but Brown was blinded by the blast. As he was carried away, he said, "I don't care, I knocked the ----- out."[1]

Another of Major General Thomas' brigades, 129th Infantry Brigade, had, meanwhile, been attempting to force its way along the road to Arnhem in support of 5th Guards Armoured Brigade's Irish Group but had been held up by *Kampfgruppe* Knaust. The enemy troops and tanks had blocked the road at Elst. The Germans also attacked the right flank of the Irish and Welsh Guard Groups and the Guards Division was unable to make any progress all day.

## THE OOSTERBEEK PERIMETER

"That Friday the mortars started early," writes Mike Rossiter in an account based on the testimony of Craftsman Ron Jordan who was serving with the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers attached to the 1st Airborne Division. Jordan's unit was holding part of the northern section of the perimeter. "He was engulfed in a mad world of explosions, falling shrapnel [*sic*] and blasted earth that continued for what seemed like a lifetime. When it ceased, the sounds of wounded men screaming and the cries of 'Stretcher Bearer' were heard from all over the perimeter." Soon Ron himself would become a victim.

He was told to report to the Hartenstein Hotel with a handful of others as the enemy had breached the perimeter in that area. He joined a group of around thirty others in the grounds of the now badly damaged hotel to await orders. Then the mortars started again.

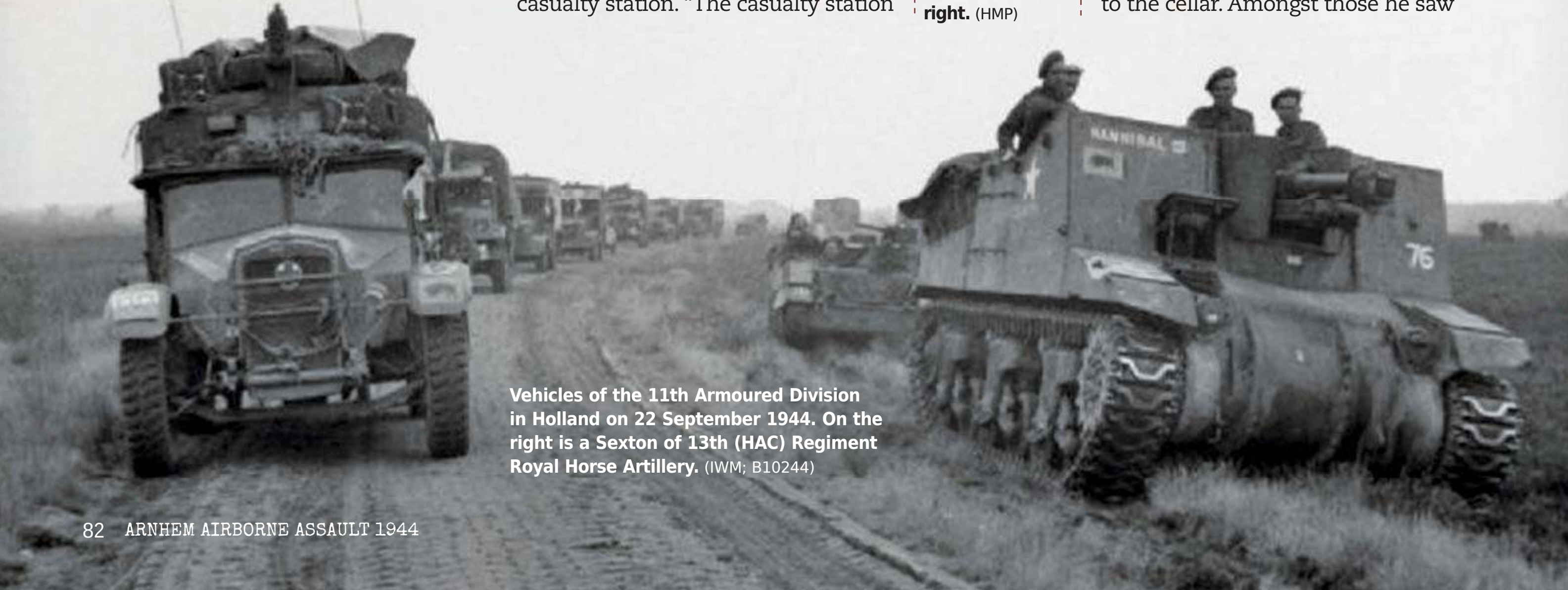
Caught out in the open many men were hit. As they tried to disperse, one bomb exploded close to Ron. He laid on the ground for a few minutes, pain travelling up his leg and blood seeping into his battledress. He managed to get back on his feet and limp to the hotel and down the cellar steps to the casualty station. "The casualty station was dimly lit, with the wounded packed in so tightly that there was barely room to move about. There were cries of pain from many of the patients and the smell of stale sweat, blood and suppurating flesh was almost overpowering."[2] The men felt even more beleaguered than ever as poor weather prevented any attempts at a re-supply drop. This also meant that the rest of the Polish brigade remained stuck in England.

ABOVE LEFT: **German troops pushing forward against the rapidly shrinking British perimeter.** (BUNDESARCHIV, BILD 101I-590-2332-07A/APPE[ARPPE]/CC-BY-SA)

ABOVE RIGHT: **This diorama in the Airborne Museum 'Hartenstein', in what were the cellars of the former Hartenstein Hotel, is entitled "Conference in the Cellar." Described on the accompanying information panel as being "very close to the spot where it actually took place", two of the individuals depicted are Major-General R.E. Urquhart (centre, facing the camera) and Colonel Charles Mackenzie, sat down to the right.** (HMP)

## "THE DIVISION NO LONGER EXISTS"

The heavy mortar bombardment had also been felt by the Border Regiment holding the western side of the perimeter, as Trooper Ray Price of the battalion's Support Troop recounted the casualties the troop had suffered that morning: "Corporal Mason was the first, and he was killed mainly, I think, because he just didn't dig in deep enough. After that, John Serginson was hit when a piece of shrapnel caught him in the thigh. I was affected by blast. I don't really remember what happened but, apparently, I got up and walked around the trenches in the open in a daze. Some of the others then got me under cover and I was taken up to the aid post at the Hartenstein." Like Ron Jordan, Ray Price went down to the cellar. Amongst those he saw



**Vehicles of the 11th Armoured Division in Holland on 22 September 1944. On the right is a Sexton of 13th (HAC) Regiment Royal Horse Artillery.** (IWM; B10244)

ABOVE LEFT: **A German 2cm anti-aircraft gun in action at Arnhem.** (BUNDESARCHIV, BILD 101II-M2KBK-772-24/HÖPPNER/ CC-BY-SA)

ABOVE RIGHT: **Major-General R.E. Urquhart poses beside the airborne pennant that he planted in the grounds of his headquarters in the Hartenstein Hotel, the last British stronghold in the Arnhem and Oosterbeek area before the evacuation, on 22 September 1944.** (HMP)

there was one man who was very badly shell-shocked and was crying all the time. Ron took the man in his arms.

"The Division no longer exists as such," Urquhart had told his Chief of Staff, Colonel Charles Mackenzie, before the latter set out to row across the river with Lieutenant Colonel Eddie Myers, the Commander Royal Engineers of the 1st Airborne Division. "We are now merely a collection of individuals holding on."[3]

## CAPTIVES

Those men that had been captured by the Germans when they took the Arnhem road bridge were moved on the 22nd to Velp on the eastern outskirts of the town. They were placed under guard in a large house with the name of "Bene Sita". Amongst those in the house were Freddy Gough and Major Anthony Deane-Drummond, who was the second-in-charge of the 1st Airborne Division's signals.

This was not the first time that Deane-Drummond had found himself in the hands of the enemy. In 1941 he had taken part in Operation *Colossus* an airborne raid in southern Italy and had been captured by the Italians. He managed to escape only to be re-captured near the Swiss border. This did not deter Deane-Drummond, who escaped yet again, this time reaching the United Kingdom.

When he knew that "the game was up" at the bridge, he and a few others had made their way down to the Rhine, and broke into a house just a few yards from the river bank. "We were looking at the river from a window at the back when I heard a German crashing through the front door," recollected Deane-Drummond. "We all dived into the lavatory and locked the door on the inside. But then to our dismay a section of about ten German soldiers came upstairs, and from the sounds of tile-removing and furniture-shifting, it was clear they were setting up a machine-gun to cover the street."

Deane-Drummond and four others were trapped in the tiny toilet, for the next three days, taking it in turns to sit on the seat. "Often German soldiers would come and try the door, but on finding it engaged went away and tried somewhere else." Eventually, the five men could take the tension no longer and during the early hours of the 22nd, as the Germans dozed, they slipped out into the street.[4]

"We dodged from shadow to shadow down the Rhine. As we swam noiselessly out into the river, burst of firing broke out around us, and the reflections of burning buildings in the water made me sure we would be spotted." The current proved so strong that the group was washed downstream. Deane-Drummond reached the south bank, hoping to be greeted by the men of XXX Corps. Instead he fell into a German trench. As Deane-Drummond laconically put it, "The game was up". Deane-Drummond was in captivity once more - but not for long.

## THE POLES

The Poles at Driel were coming under increasing pressure from the Germans and, despite some success with their PIATs, German tanks had broken through the brigade perimeter at one point. As he drove through Driel Sosabowski looked around him: "The streets were strewn with broken glass from shattered windows and here and there a building burned and smoked as a result of shelling fire. Few civilians were about, except for an occasional stretcher party, taking injured women and children to a first-aid post."

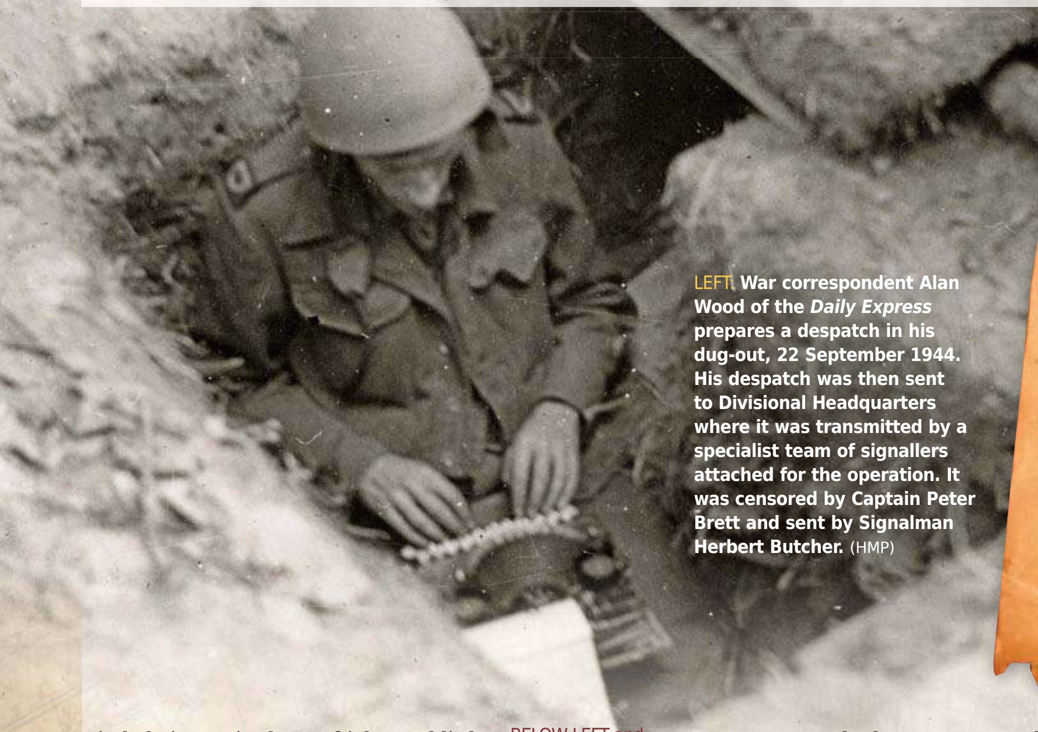
Indeed, throughout the fighting at Arnhem many in the local Dutch population displayed remarkable courage in risking their lives to assist wounded soldiers. One woman in particular, Kate ter Horst, a housewife and mother of five children, is remembered as "The Angel of Arnhem".

Soon after the Airborne Forces arrived, Captain R. Martin, the Regimental Medical Officer attached to the 1st Airlanding Light Regiment RA, asked the ter Horsts for permission to set up a regimental aid station in their house at the Benedendorpsweg in Oosterbeek. The family consented.

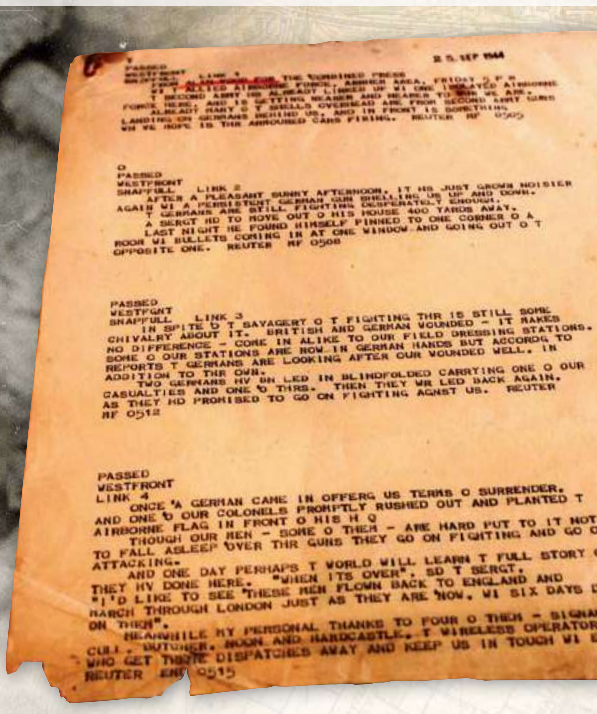
"Kate ter Horst her house now turned into a fortress and a full-scale hospital for wounded airborne troops was a sainted mother to the hundreds finding refuge there," wrote the historians John Nichol and Tony Rennell. "She would walk the makeshift wards, the vision of an angel, minister to the sick, pray with the dying, give aid and comfort, for all of which she was one of the best-known and most admired heroes of the Arnhem story. But she also had to be a mother to her own five children, terrified by what was happening to them and their home. When the fighting around the house was at its worst, she would draw them around her to sing songs and to look through a picture book by the light of a candle. 'We hear the shrapnel bursting and the splinters rattling against the house. Even down in the cellar, the noise is painful so I put cotton wool

▷▷

BELOW: **The same view today - as seen by visitors to the Airborne Museum.** (HMP)



LEFT: **War correspondent Alan Wood of the *Daily Express* prepares a despatch in his dug-out, 22 September 1944. His despatch was then sent to Divisional Headquarters where it was transmitted by a specialist team of signallers attached for the operation. It was censored by Captain Peter Brett and sent by Signalman Herbert Butcher.** (HMP)



22 SEP 1944

PASSED
WESTFRONT   LINK 1
SNAPFULL   FROM ~~ALAN WOOD FOR~~ THE COMBINED PRESS
WI T ALLIED AIRBORNE FORCE, ARNHEM AREA, FRIDAY [illegible]
   T SECOND ARMY HS ALREADY LINKED UP WI ONE ISOLATED AIRBORNE
FORCE HERE, AND IS GETTING NEARER AND NEARER TO [illegible] WE ARE.
   ALREADY MANY O T SHELLS OVERHEAD ARE FROM SECOND ARMY GUNS
LANDING ON GERMANS BEHIND US, AND IN FRONT IS SOMETHING
[illegible] WE HOPE IS THE ARMOURED CARS FIRING.   REUTER   MF 0505

PASSED
WESTFRONT
SNAPFULL   LINK 2
   AFTER A PLEASANT SUNNY AFTERNOON, IT HS JUST GROWN NOISIER
AGAIN WI A PERSISTENT GERMAN GUN SHELLING US UP AND DOWN.
   T GERMANS ARE STILL FIGHTING DESPERATELY ENOUGH.
   A SERGT HD TO MOVE OUT O HIS HOUSE 400 YARDS AWAY.
   LAST NIGHT HE FOUND HIMSELF PINNED TO ONE CORNER O A
ROOM WI BULLETS COMING IN AT ONE WINDOW AND GOING OUT O T
OPPOSITE ONE.   REUTER   MF 0508

PASSED
WESTFRONT
SNAPFULL   LINK 3
   IN SPITE O T SAVAGERY O T FIGHTING THR IS STILL SOME
CHIVALRY ABOUT IT.   BRITISH AND GERMAN WOUNDED - IT MAKES
NO DIFFERENCE - COME IN ALIKE TO OUR FIELD DRESSING STATIONS.
SOME O OUR STATIONS ARE NOW IN GERMAN HANDS BUT ACCORDG TO
REPORTS T GERMANS ARE LOOKING AFTER OUR WOUNDED WELL. IN
ADDITION TO THR OWN.
   TWO GERMANS HV BN LED IN BLINDFOLDED CARRYING ONE O OUR
CASUALTIES AND ONE O THRS.   THEN THEY WR LED BACK AGAIN.
AS THEY HD PROMISED TO GO ON FIGHTING AGNST US.   REUTER
MF 0512

PASSED
WESTFRONT
LINK 4
   ONCE A GERMAN CAME IN OFFERG US TERMS O SURRENDER.
AND ONE O OUR COLONELS PROMPTLY RUSHED OUT AND PLANTED T
AIRBORNE FLAG IN FRONT O HIS H Q
   THOUGH OUR MEN - SOME O THEM - ARE HARD PUT TO IT NOT
TO FALL ASLEEP OVER THR GUNS THEY GO ON FIGHTING AND GO
ATTACKING.
   AND ONE DAY PERHAPS T WORLD WILL LEARN T FULL STORY
THEY HV DONE HERE.   "WHEN ITS OVER", SD T SERGT,
"I'D LIKE TO SEE THESE MEN FLOWN BACK TO ENGLAND AND
MARCH THROUGH LONDON JUST AS THEY ARE NOW. WI SIX DAYS
ON THEM".
   MEANWHILE MY PERSONAL THANKS TO FOUR O THEM - SIGNA
CULL, BUTCHER, MOON AND HARDCASTLE, T WIRELESS OPERATOR
WHO GET THESE DISPATCHES AWAY AND KEEP US IN TOUCH WI
REUTER   END   0515

in baby's ears.' When a frightened little one announced that she wanted to go back to the nursery to sleep in her own bed, Kate had to calm her while concealing from the child the fact that her bedroom now housed a dozen bloodied and bandaged men.

"As for the men, they were invariably anxious about her children, sending down treats of eggs or apples and sweets for them. Those manning the walls would sneak downstairs from time to time to connect with the semblance of family life still going on down there. Kate recalled with guilt how one soldier, his face and body black from powder and trench earth, came into the cellar and took her baby on his knee. She grabbed back the child because the man was so dirty and immediately regretted the deed. 'How could I? Perhaps it was the last time he would look into a child's eyes.' She wished she could have called him back and handed him her baby son to hold, but he was gone, back up the stairs to fight, his helmet on and his Sten gun under his arm, a moment of much-needed humanity lost."[5]

During the eight days of fighting, Kate ter Horst and her family tended to about 250 wounded British paratroopers. The house, crammed to overflowing from attic to cellar with wounded men, suffered appalling damage. Eventually, her garden contained fifty-seven graves.[6]

BELOW LEFT and RIGHT: **W.J.M. Duyts ON5 OKZRP MBE, who as a young man was wounded during Operation *Market Garden* and has since been a long-serving guide at the Airborne Forces Museum at Oosterbeek, points out the spot near the Hartenstein Hotel (visible in the picture on the right) where Alan Wood of *The Daily Express* sat in a dug-out typing his despatches (above) during the closing phases of the battle. At the point when Wood was sheltering here, German troops were barely 100 yards to the left of the spot where he is photographed standing.** (HMP)

Shortly after lunch on the 22nd, Sosabowski was visited by Colonel Charles Mackenzie and Lieutenant Colonel Eddie Myers. The pair informed Sosabowski that they intended to go to see Horrocks to explain how desperate the situation of the 1st Airborne Division was as they clearly believed that the XXX Corps commander did not realize how close to complete destruction the division was. They also urged Sosabowski to send as many men as he could across the river. "Even five or ten," he was told, "might make a difference".

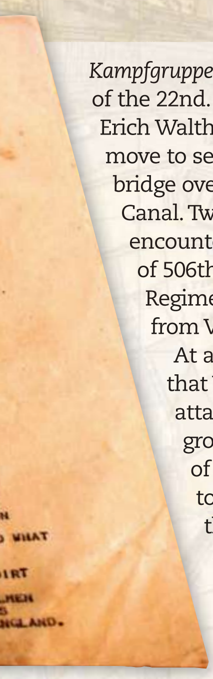
It was indeed the case that the Second Army's command did not fully appreciate what was happening north of the Rhine. In the original *Market Garden* plan the 52nd (Lowland) Division was to have been flown into the Arnhem area once Urquhart's men had found a suitable landing site. This, it was hoped, would be by D+4.

When it became apparent that things were not going quite as expected, Major General Edmund Hakewill Smith, offered to take part of his division in by glider as close as was possible to Oosterbeek. This proposal was rejected by Browning, who communicated back to the United Kingdom saying: "Thanks for your message but offer not, repeat not, required as situation better than you think." Browning's misplaced confidence was soon shattered when the Germans suddenly struck the most vulnerable part of XXX Corps' line of communications.

## CLOSING THE CORRIDOR

The road along which XXX Corps had travelled up to Nijmegen, known as "the corridor", was held predominantly by the men of the two American airborne divisions. It was obviously vital that the corridor remained firmly in Allied hands otherwise all the troops at Nijmegen and Arnhem would be cut off. This was fully understood by *Generalfeldmarschall* Model and every possible effort was made to sever this route.

This took the form of a pincer movement by two battle groups to cut the corridor at Veghel, a town between Eindhoven and Nijmegen. These


N
D WHAT
IRT
MEN
S
NGLAND.

*Kampfgruppen* struck on the morning of the 22nd. At 09.00 hours *Oberst* Erich Walther's battle group began its move to seize Veghel and destroy the bridge over the Zuid Willems Vaart Canal. Two hours later Walther encountered the leading company of 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment at Uden, eight miles from Veghel.

At around the same time that Walther had opened his attack, the second battle group, under the command of Major Huber, pushed up to the village of Eerde to the south-west of Veghel and at 14.00 hours began shelling the bridge over the canal. At that moment a company of the 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment drove up, supported by a squadron of the 44th Royal Tank Regiment. More Allied troops arrived, including the 2nd and 3rd battalions of the 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment which bumped into the rear of Huber's *Kampfgruppe*.

The ensuing fighting was recalled by Karl Max Wietzorek: "We came up against hard, bitter opposition and our desperate attempt at attack was brought to a halt. It was raining and many of our men slipped and slithered down the wet slope into the canal where they drowned."[7]

The fighting around Veghel lasted all day but by nightfall the German thrust had been parried and the village was secure, with Veghel itself being held by six infantry battalions and two squadrons of tanks, whilst two other battalions occupied the outlying villages to the south. To the north, though, the road through the corridor – "Hell's Highway" to the Allies – had been severed.

This blockage in the artery of XXX Corps, through which had to flow all the supplies and reinforcements needed for the battle to save the 1st Airborne Division and Sosabowski's Polish Brigade, was serious in the extreme. What was equally worrying for Horrocks was that the break in this road meant that the three other Allied divisions north of the Maas were now cut off.

## THE END OF THE DAY

When Lieutenant Colonel Taylor reached Driel he met Mackenzie and Myers who were able to explain that they had not heard from Frost for two days and that it had to be assumed the bridge had been recaptured. The only way that Taylor could help the men fighting at Oosterbeek was by using the DUKWs.

A suitable spot had to be found for launching the DUKWs. Meanwhile Sosabowski was going to send as many men over the river as he could. In just four little boats only six men could cross at a time, pulled across the water on a hawser – a slow and laborious process.

To give the men the best possible chance of getting safely across Sosabowski waited until nightfall before sending the first boats over. "All was quiet at the river crossing points except for a muffled thud and odd grunt, there was little to show what was being prepared. The Germans seemed to suspect nothing," recalled the Polish general. "Hardly had the first boat crossed when into the black sky shot a German parachute flare. A feint red spark fizzed and then the magnesium caught, spreading a brilliant white, blinding light down on the river. Two other boats were halfway across. Enemy machine-guns commenced spraying the river, stirring up small waves, making the water boil with hot steel. Mortars started ranging on our bank, falling in the middle of the troops gathered for embarkation."[8]

The 1st Airborne Division's plight was so severe that the Poles would not allow themselves to be stopped by the enemy. Regardless of the German fire, Sosabowski's men continued to try throughout the night to cross to the north bank.

The attempt to cross the Rhine in the DUKWs was planned for 02.00 hours. They drove towards the river but, despite the efforts of the drivers and guides the amphibious vehicles, heavily laden with sorely-needed supplies and ammunition for the 1st Airborne Division, slid off the narrow roads and became bogged down in the soft verges. They never reached the Rhine.

The seriousness of the situation facing Urquhart's men had finally registered with General Horrocks. On the 20th he had gone to bed "a happy man", but he now declared that "September 22nd was a worrying day". Looking back on what he called the "black 22nd", Horrocks wrote that, "I am certain that this was about the blackest moment of my life. I began to find it difficult to sleep." ●

LEFT: **One of the actual despatches produced by Alan Wood during the heat of battle.** (HMP)

BELOW LEFT: **The former Hartenstein Hotel is now the home of the excellent Airborne Museum 'Hartenstein' which has in its collection the actual pennant Urquhart used. Urquhart himself opened the museum on 11 May 1978.** (HMP)

BELOW: **Men of HQ Company, 1st Border, pictured in foxholes in the Van Lennepweg gardens, 22 September 1944. The out of focus individual on the right is a wireless operator.** (HMP)

## NOTES

1. Buckingham, *op. cit.*, p.213; Horrocks, *op. cit.*, p.225.
2. Mike Rossiter, *We Fought at Arnhem* (Corgi, London, 2012), pp.322-3.
3. Whiting, *op. cit.*, p.164.
4. John Nichol and Tony Rennell, *Home Run, Escape from Nazi Europe* (Penguin, London, 2008), pp.352-3.
5. John Nichol and Tony Rennell, *Arnhem: The Battle for Survival* (Penguin, London, 2011), pp.189-190.
6. Kate ter Horst and her husband, Jan, were decorated for their actions by being made Honorary Members of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire. In 1992, Kate ter Horst died after she was struck by a car outside her home. Jan died at the age of 98 in 2003. He was still living in the same house at the time.
7. Kershaw, *op. cit.*, 319.
8. Sosabowski, *op. cit.*, pp.174-5.

# D+6 SATURDAY, 23 SEPTEMBER

## DANGEROUS WATERS

**IT WAS vital that the German counter-attack on the "Hell's Highway" between Veghel and Uden was dealt with immediately. So important was this that, despite Horrock's instructions that his troops should always push forwards and never turn back, this order had to be temporarily put aside, and the 32nd Guards Brigade was told to return southwards to attack the enemy from the north.**

Meanwhile an attack was launched against the Germans which began with a bombardment by 130 Battery, 153rd Field Regiment (Leicestershire Yeomanry) RA and the 4.2-inch heavy mortar platoon of No.1 Independent Machine Gun Company, Royal Northumberland Fusiliers, whilst the rest of XXX Corps awaited the outcome.

"South of Veghel Allied trucks waited, parked nose to tail, jammed by the deadlock to the north," wrote the author Robert Kershaw. "Lying in ditches by the roadside were scores of drivers and infantry soldiers, anxiously scanning the huge clouds of black bulbous smoke rising in the skies above Veghel. Detonations and the sounds of battle could be clearly heard, trucks loaded with American paratroopers and jeepborne anti-tank crews wove in and out of the myriad of parked vehicles driving towards the sound of gunfire ahead." [1]

So effective was the artillery bombardment, followed by a forceful approach from the 101st Airborne Division, the Germans withdrew eastwards, almost without firing a shot, but having lost heavily. At 15.00 hours the Grenadier Guards linked up with the 44th Royal Tank Regiment at Veghel.

The highway was open again but the greater part of the day had been lost. "There was," concludes Kershaw, "an infectious feeling of crisis in the air".

## OVER THE RHINE

During the course of the previous night some fifty Poles of the 8th Parachute Company, under Lieutenant Albert Smaczny, had been pulled and paddled across the river and had taken up positions at the Oosterbeek church. Only one rubber dinghy was left undamaged.

Dawn brought heavy and accurate fire down on the defenders, the German gunners being directed by the many snipers that had infiltrated the perimeter. Smaczny's Poles were then moved to a large white manor house on the Benedendorpsweg and joined up with the Poles that had landed by glider on D+2 to form their own small battle group. "That day," wrote Sosabowski, "in roughly dug positions, mangled and shattered by shells, not far from the ever-decreasing perimeter, the remaining six-pounder anti-tank guns of the Polish Battery fired until the barrels of the weapon's were hot in an effort to keep the enemy at arm's length. They knocked out two tanks and frightened off many others."

Sosabowski related the experience of one of the officers who was walking round the trenches, trying to keep the spirits of the men up with a comforting word or two. Nearing one trench he heard a groan and saw a sergeant lying at the bottom. The officer asked him what was wrong and the NCO replied, "Oh, nothing, sir." The officer, thinking that the sergeant was losing his nerve, proceeded to lecture the man on keeping his head and controlling himself.

With that the officer continued on his rounds, but returned later to check on the NCO. This time, when the officer asked how he was, the sergeant pointed to a blood-soaked bandage around his, obviously, twisted leg.

"What's that?" demanded the officer.

"I was hit in the leg, but I dressed it myself."

"But when I asked you before, you said you were all right."

"Yes, sir, but there was a lot of shelling and I did not want you or anyone else to be exposed – so I dressed the leg myself."[2] ▷▷

The weather was set for a period of clear skies, and the improvement in conditions brought with it renewed optimism. Fresh troops would be dropped to bolster those holding the Corridor and fresh supplies delivered to the men at Oosterbeek. The Germans, though, had plans of their own.

MAIN PICTURE: **Four British paratroopers moving through a shell-damaged house in Oosterbeek, 23 September 1944. There has been much speculation as to exactly where this image was taken. Research by the historian Robert Voskuil, of the Friends of The Airborne Museum, indicates that this was in fact a winter garden or similar building that stood to the East of the hotel's stable block. Such was the damage that after the war this building was demolished and never rebuilt.** (HMP)

ABOVE LEFT: **A British airborne soldier fires back at German snipers from the shell-blasted front balcony of the Hartenstein Hotel, 23 September 1944. He is using an American M1 carbine – a weapon he may have acquired from one of the twelve American soldiers that were present at Divisional HQ during the battle.** (HMP)

TOP RIGHT: **Pictured by a German *Kriegsberichter*, or War Reporter, on 23 September 1944, this is one of the German soldiers involved in the fighting at Arnhem.** (BUNDESARCHIV, BILD 101I-497-3503-09/RÖDER/CC-BY-SA)

## IN DRIEL

At 09.00 hours a liaison officer from Airborne Corps HQ worked his way up through Elst to Driel. He found Sosabowski and told him that the rest of the Polish brigade was to cross the river that night. The 43rd (Wessex) Division, which would have arrived in full at the south bank by then, would be able to provide all the boats Sosabowski would require. Why the 43rd Division was not selected for this was not explained.

Sosabowski therefore sent one of his staff officers, Major R.R. Malaszkiewicz, to make contact with the 43rd Division in a Jeep loaned by the 4th/7th Dragoon Guards. Malaszkiewicz worked his way through the German lines and reached the outlying British positions. Here he was surprised by what he saw. Not only did he find well-dug positions amongst pleasant orchards, but also “so many telephone lines and tents, it looked like a peacetime manoeuvre”.

## REINFORCEMENTS ARRIVE

American gliders destined for the Eindhoven and Nijmegen sectors, which had been grounded since the 19th, were ordered to be ready to fly in the afternoon. The troops they would carry would help strengthen the Corridor. These reinforcements totalled almost 3,000 men of the 101st Airborne Division and the remaining 3,385 men of the 82nd. In addition to this, the rest of the Polish Brigade, which had been recalled on the 21st, was included in a serial of forty-two Dakotas. The Poles would not be dropped on Driel, however, but on Drop Zone ‘O’ in the Overasselt/Grave area.

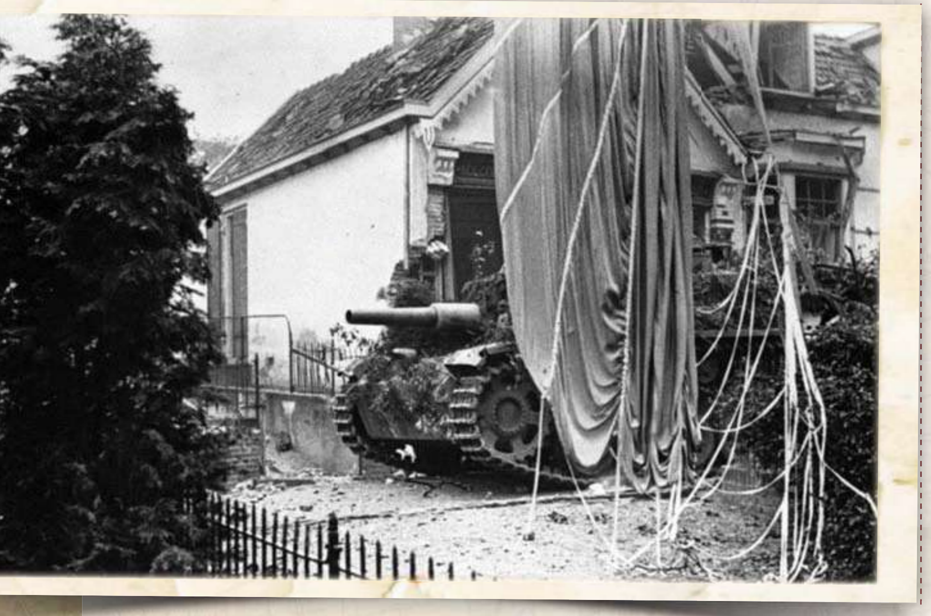
Another re-supply drop to those at Oosterbeek would also be attempted by 123 Dakotas and Stirlings of Nos. 46 and 38 Groups. Though some accounts state that bad weather had precluded flying on the 22nd, it is also said whilst the weather was not good, flying would have been possible but that the 1st Airborne Division did not request an air drop. Now though, with cold, clear weather, a major effort would be made to supply the beleaguered troops at Oosterbeek.[3]

A total of 240 fighters from No.11 Group were detailed to provide protection for the tugs, gliders and re-supply aircraft. To this was added seven Fighter Groups of the USAAF 8th Fighter Command, numbering 586 ’planes. To suppress the flak that would inevitably greet the transport and supply aircraft the escorts were instructed to attack the German gun positions. All of the aircraft were in the air by mid-afternoon.

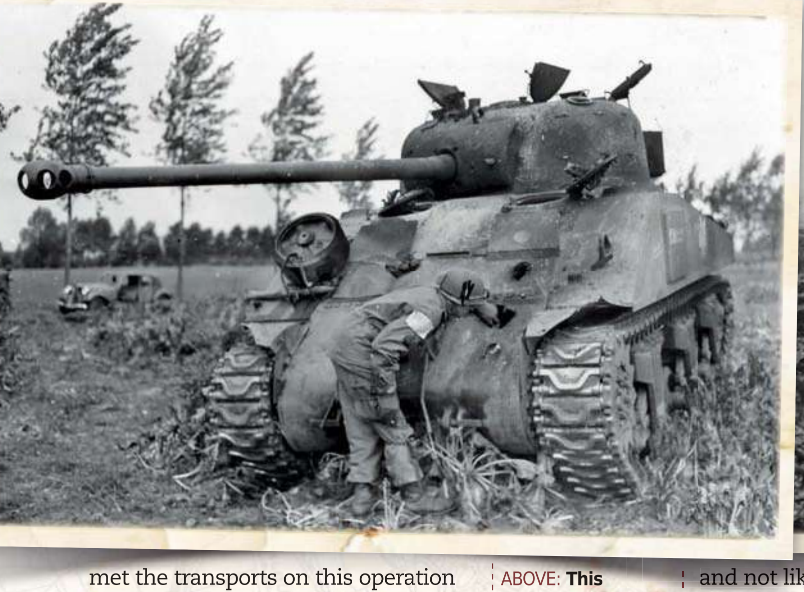
## FLAK ATTACK

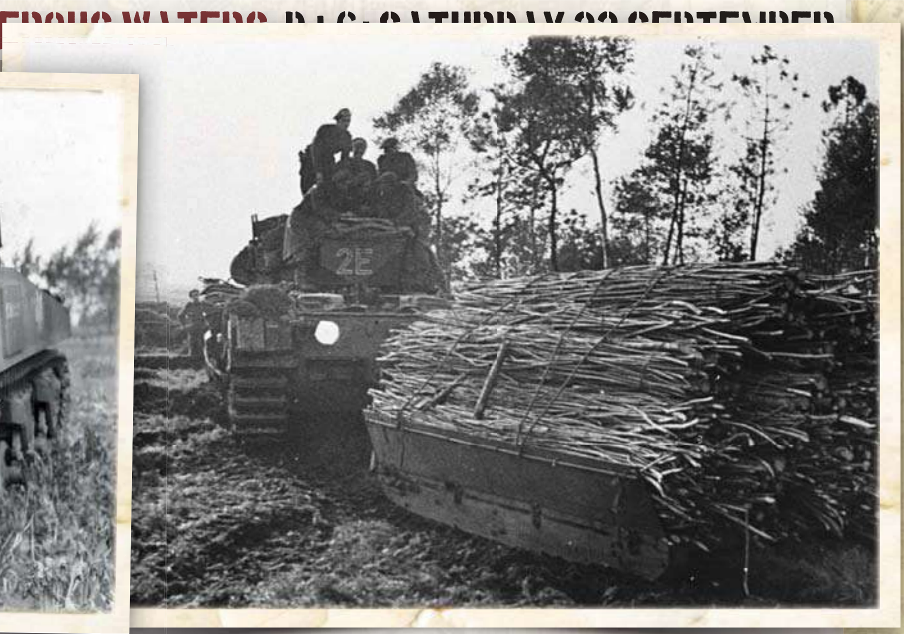
The outbound Dakotas and Stirlings were untroubled by the *Luftwaffe* but it was a far different matter when they reached the drop zones. Whilst circling Arnhem, Colonel Fred Grey, flying with the P-47 Thunderbolts of the US 78th Fighter Group, recalled how they met a “terrific” barrage from light anti-aircraft guns from hedgerows and woods north of the town. Unknown to the pilots, the woods, by the intended drop zone, were no longer in British hands.

“Colonel Grey took a squadron and temporarily silenced these guns, while another squadron suppressed guns in a church south of the woods [possibly at Heveadorp]. Just after these attacks the Group witnessed a formation of C-47s from the south at extremely low altitude. The transports dropped supplies into the woods the pilots had just attacked. Three C-47s approaching were shot down by some of the guns which resumed firing in this marred effort. Immediately the third squadron attacked the remaining guns and destroyed them, as two more wings of C-47s and Stirlings appeared and dropped more supplies into the midst of the German defended woods. No flak



LEFT: **A Sturmhaubitze 42, a variant of Sturmgeschütz III which was equipped with a 105mm gun, pushes its way cautiously past a discarded British supply parachute in Weverstraat, 23 September 1944.** (BUNDESARCHIV, BILD 183-J27759/CC-BY-SA)





met the transports on this operation despite their very low approach altitude."4

In the instance referred to above, it was actually only two, and not three Dakotas that were shot down, However, a total of thirteen aircraft were lost and many more damaged, most due to flak.

Though no German fighters had been seen during the run in, a force of fifty Messerschmitt Bf 109s and twenty-nine Focke-Wulf Fw 190s appeared in the late afternoon as the transports were returning to base and engaged the P-47s of the US 353rd Fighter Group which was acting as the rearguard.

"The Fighter Group," recorded its un-named historian, "led by Lieutenant Colonel Gallup, flew head on into the 109s and broke up their formation. They were then engaged by the FW 190s and a general dog fight took place from 5,000 feet to the deck. The Group claimed 14 FW 190s and 6 Me 109s destroyed, and five planes damaged. Lieutenant Auchinlos, sent a 109 down in flames, damaged another 109 as it went into clouds, blew up a 190 with a 2-second burst from directly astern, damaged another 109, and sent a second 190 down in flames with his last rounds of ammunition."5

## THE REST OF THE POLISH PARAS ARRIVE

The men of the 1st Independent Polish Parachute Brigade duly landed in the area held by the US 82nd Airborne Division. They moved swiftly off the drop zone as behind them were the gliders bringing the remainder of the 82nd Division.

Major M. Tonn, who commanded the Polish reinforcements, was met by a staff officer from Airborne Corps who told him that there was no transport immediately available to take them to join their fellow countrymen at Driel and not likely to be until the next day. Tonn was also told that his force would temporarily be placed under 82nd Division's command. Desperate to get to Driel, there was nothing Tonn could do but settle down for the night and wait for something to happen next day.

ABOVE: **This Sherman Firefly of 'C' Squadron, 44th Royal Tank Regiment was knocked out whilst engaging a Panther just east of Veghel on 23 September 1944. The enemy tank was engaged by the Sherman's crew, but their first shot missed. Whilst they tried to clear a misted-up telescope the British tank was hit twice. The crew managed to escape. This image of the knocked-out tank was taken a few hours later.** (US NATIONAL ARCHIVES)

## ON THE GROUND AT OOSTERBEEK

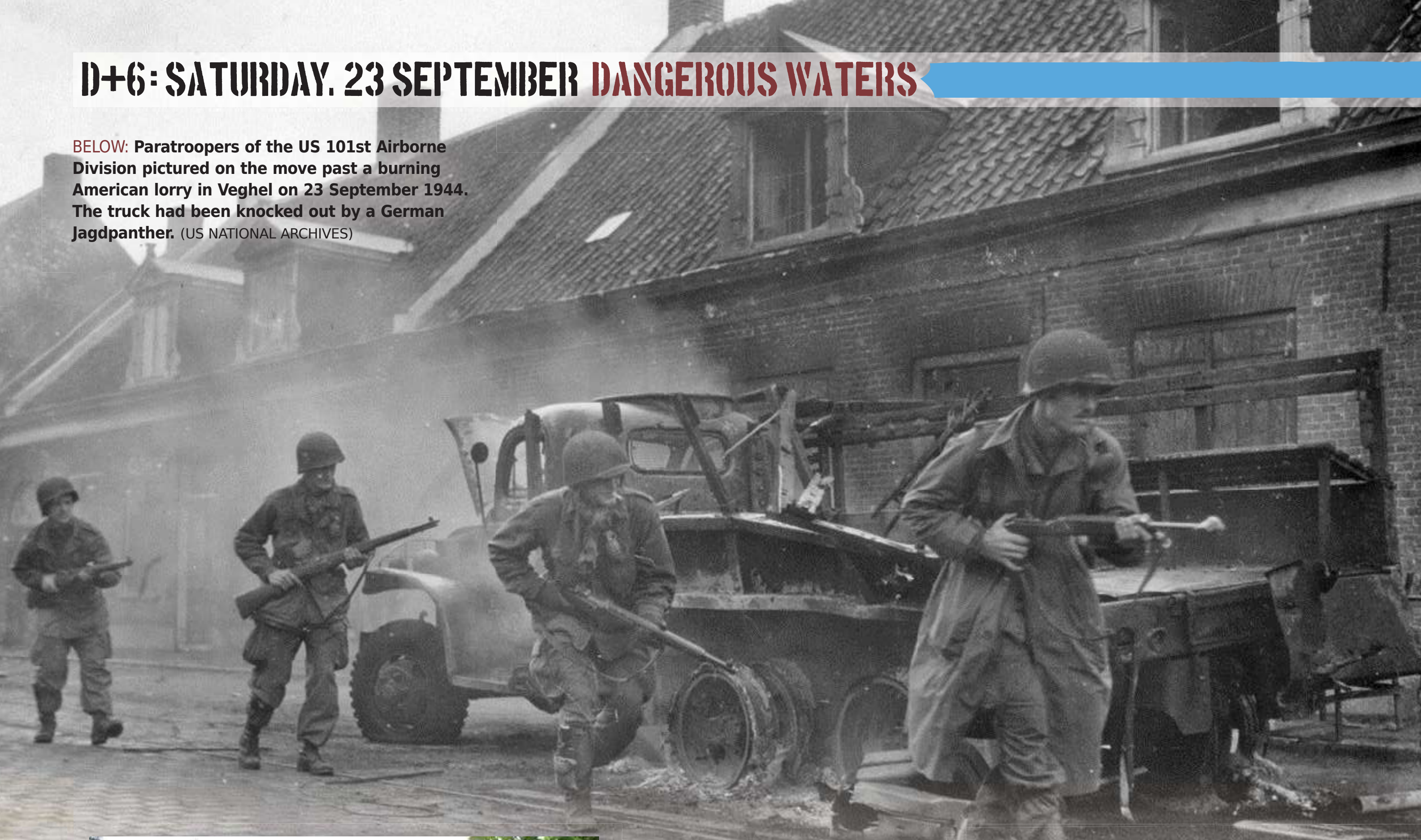
Major Richard Lonsdale continued to hold the south-east corner of the Oosterbeek perimeter with a mixed and improvised force. Known as "Lonsdale Force", this included the men of the Glider Pilot Regiment now led by Major Robert Cain of the South Staffs who continued his heroic efforts against the German armour.

The men of the Glider Pilot Regiment were more than just fliers. Once on the ground, unlike their US counterparts, British glider pilots were trained to be what was termed by their regimental commander, Colonel George Chatterton, as "Total Soldiers". They were trained to fight as light infantry alongside the troops they carried and, in addition, they were expected to be able to operate any of the equipment, heavy weapons or vehicles that they carried on board their gliders. Their contribution to Urquhart's force is often underestimated, but in total there were more than 1,200 of these men – men who turned out to be good versatile, fighting soldiers.

One of these "Total Soldiers" was Lieutenant Michael Donald Keen Dauncey who, from 'G' Squadron, No.1 Wing, had flown as second pilot in a Horsa of the first air lift on 17 September. On the 23rd he led a small group of paratroopers on a raid against a German

▷▷

TOP RIGHT and BELOW: **Two pictures of Churchill IV AVREs (Armoured Vehicle Royal Engineers), of the Assault Squadron RE, on the move during the Allied advance in Holland.** (THE TANK MUSEUM)



BELOW: **Paratroopers of the US 101st Airborne Division pictured on the move past a burning American lorry in Veghel on 23 September 1944. The truck had been knocked out by a German Jagdpanther.** (US NATIONAL ARCHIVES)

ABOVE: **The home of the ter Horst family at 136 Benedendorpsweg in Oosterbeek. By the end of *Market Garden*, the grounds of the house had been used as a burial plot for Allied casualties. Having survived the fighting in 1944, tragedy struck the family in November 1947 when Kate ter Horst's eldest son, Pieter Albert, was killed by an unexploded anti-tank mine in a meadow along the Rhine.** (COURTESY OF PIM VAN TEND)

ABOVE: **This house stands on the north side of Utrechtsweg in Oosterbeek at the junction with Stationsweg – just out of view to the right. Known as the Villa Quatre Bras, in its grounds is the memorial to the men of the 21st Independent Parachute Company which was commanded by Major B. "Boy" Wilson who is described as "the oldest para in 1st AB Division". The memorial is on the same spot as a Bren gun position in September 1944. It was in this location that a number of medical facilities were located – hence the name of the junction.** (COURTESY OF PIM VAN TEND)

occupied building: "We dug out some chaps who were resting at the church and the music hall and went over the road to Captain Mike Corrie, as Lieutenant Max Downing was killed and Lieutenant Frank Derbyshire was missing from patrol. We still had no PIAT. German infantry was however still rather wary of rushing about wildly. We had our positions in upper floors of houses so as to get a more commanding view which was OK except for the mortars, and a self-propelled gun which had things much its own way except that it was too cautious to come really near. If the anti-tank chap had only been there or even a PIAT would have done.

"The Germans who had been darting about all day were finally pretty well pinpointed by the evening. We thought we'd have our own back on them in return for their self-propelled guns. Two paratroops and I went out on a patrol, and supported by a little Bren-gun fire we caught them with their trousers down. After chucking a No.36 [Grenade] in through a hole in the wall and shouting that we would shoot them if they didn't come out, eight sheepish Germans filed out, three of them wounded. We were so pleased with ourselves that the whole party marched straight across the open to our own lines.

"This was too much to ask and the mortars came down on us. Major Croot [R.S. Croot – 'G' Squadron's CO] was waiting for us. He was delighted and no-one took any notice of the mortar, except the Germans who were terrified, until one landed five yards away and wounded three of them and two of us. We were standing under a large leafy tree and we were all buried in the branches, which had been severed by the mortar."[6]

## XXX CORPS

Mackenzie and Myers, covered in mud and looking like "men who had come through a Somme winter", at last worked their way round the German positions north of Nijmegen and reached Horrock's headquarters. After explaining the condition the 1st Airborne Division was in the two men bravely returned to Driel.

On their way back to join their comrades, they passed through the 43rd Division's HQ. The two officers noticed a distinct lack of urgency and the officers they spoke to thought that Mackenzie and Myers were exaggerating the situation. As has been noted by one commentator, this was exemplified by a radio exchange between Urquhart and Major General Thomas. When Urquhart mentioned the effect the constant German shelling and mortaring was having upon the beleaguered division, Thomas demanded to know why the 1st Airborne simply did not shell and mortar them back![7]

Despite such concerns the 43rd Division was still battling to break through to Driel. The 214th and 129th brigades attacked the German positions at Elst whilst the 130th Brigade made for the Rhine. Though there was some confusion when elements of the 214th and 130th brigades became entangled with each other at a crossroads that was still under German fire, the 130th finally reached the banks of the Lower Rhine by evening.

The 43rd Division had been briefed, trained and, supposedly, equipped for assault crossings. The 130th Brigade, though, had no means of crossing the Rhine. They would have to wait for their boats to come up – and they were still a long way back down the Hell's Highway and, inexplicably, when they arrived they were to be handed over to the Poles.

## WITHDRAWAL

In the evening a German officer appeared at the edge of the Oosterbeek perimeter in a half-track under a Red Cross flag. Brigadier John Hackett went to meet the German who informed him that unless the troops defending the "MDS crossroads" (the MDS standing for Main Dressing Station) moved back some 800 yards the area would be heavily mortared. This seemed strange to Hackett as the crossroads had been under fire throughout the battle – just as everywhere else throughout the perimeter. Nevertheless it was at the crossroads where dressing stations had been established in two hotels on either side of the junction of the Utrechtseweg and the Stationsweg.

To have withdrawn 800 yards would have reduced the eastern perimeter as far the Hartenstein Hotel and Hackett could not possibly agree. However, the thought of the hundreds of wounded packed into the Schoonoord and Vreewijk hotels coming under what must be presumed to be a particularly heavy bombardment worried Hackett. He felt bound to withdraw and save the men but he decided on a compromise, pulling back 100 yards. Some ground was lost to the enemy, therefore, but the wounded were saved from even more punishment, though they were now effectively in No Man's Land.

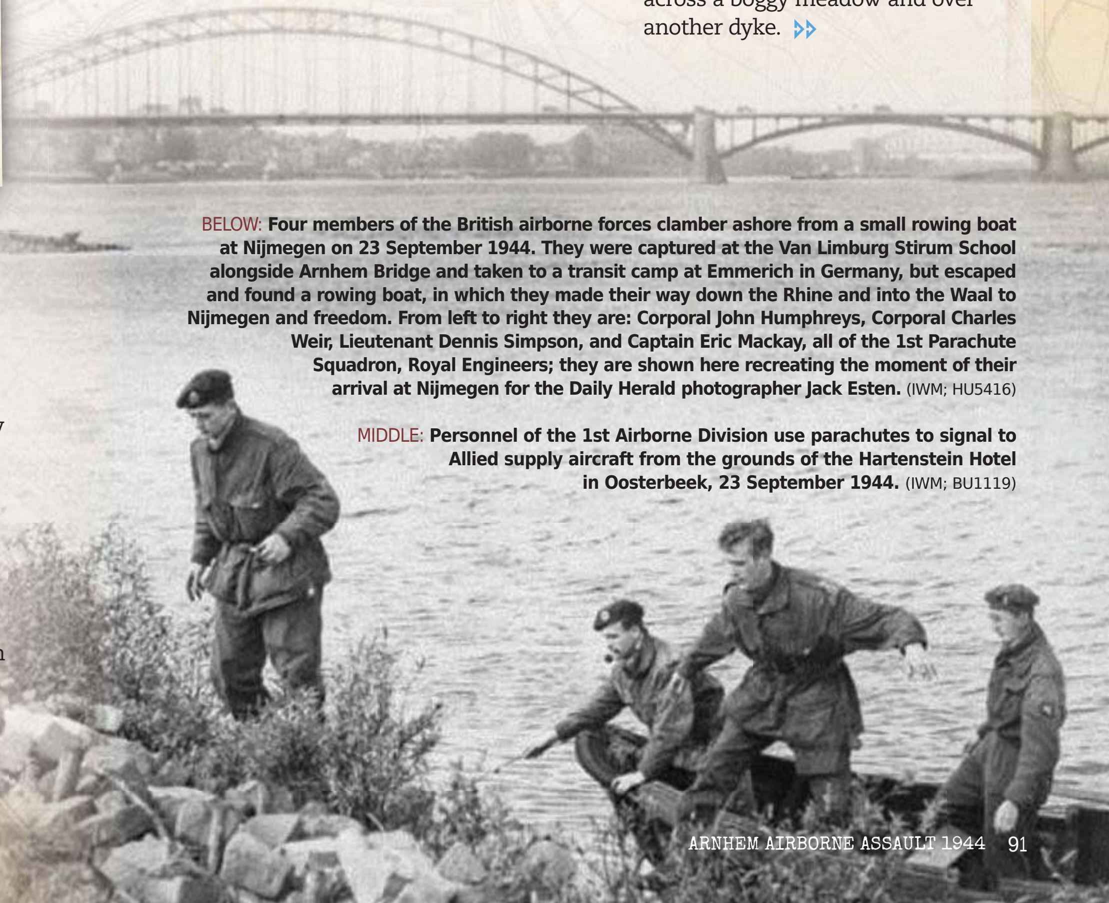
DEDICATED TO THE OFFICERS AND MEN OF THE 1st BATTALION THE BORDER REGIMENT 1st AIRLANDING BRIGADE WHO FOUGHT AND DIED DURING THE BATTLE OF ARNHEM SEPTEMBER 17th - 26th 1944
To Commemorate the actions of the 4th Battalion The Dorset Regiment, supported by the 5th Battalion, in crossing the river below this Restaurant, and fighting in this area, in support of the 1st Airborne Division 24th to 27th September 1944.
MARABOUT
DORSET

RIGHT: **These two plaques remembering two of the units that fought so valiantly at Arnhem can be seen at Restaurant Westerbouwing overlooking the Lower Rhine at Oosterbeek. The building here at the time of *Market Garden* was located at the extreme south-west of the Oosterbeek perimeter. It has been suggested by some that it would have been a far better site for Urquhart to place his headquarters than at the Hartenstein Hotel. The memorial on the left commemorates the men of the 1st Battalion the Border Regiment. That on the right recalls the actions of the 4th Battalion, the Dorset Regiment which crossed the Lower Rhine (see the next chapter) below the restaurant to support the beleaguered airborne forces.** (BOTH COURTESY OF PIM VAN TEND)

## THE SECOND CROSSING BY THE POLISH BRIGADE

The boats to be used to cross the Lower Rhine were supposed to have reached the Poles by 20.30 hours, with the crossings beginning an hour later to take full advantage of the night. Almost inevitably, it would seem, they were late.

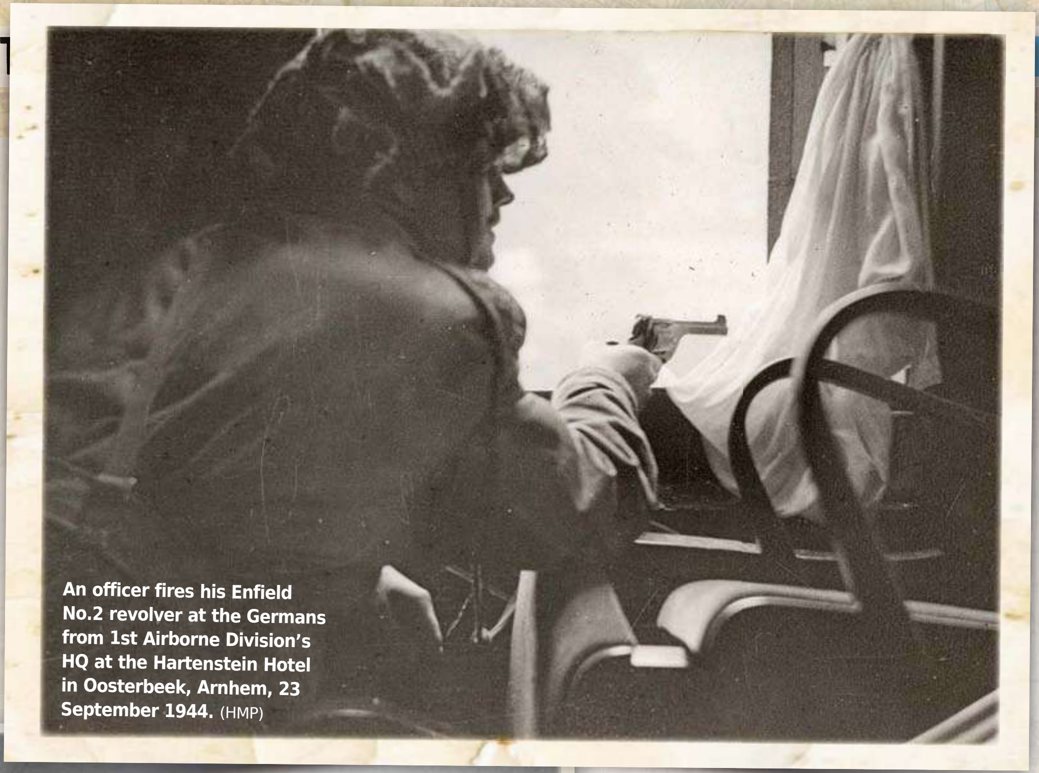
As a result, the crossings did not start until 03.00 hours, when a bombardment of the German positions above the Rhine was undertaken by the guns of the Sherman tanks of the Dragoon Guards. The men of the Polish 3rd Battalion, along with the sappers who would paddle the boats, lifted the 200lb assault craft and manhandled them over the dyke. They then carried the boats the 300 yards down to the river. The paratroopers of the 3rd Battalion, eighteen to each boat, had to haul them down the steep, slippery slope, across a boggy meadow and over another dyke. ▷▷



BELOW: **Four members of the British airborne forces clamber ashore from a small rowing boat at Nijmegen on 23 September 1944. They were captured at the Van Limburg Stirum School alongside Arnhem Bridge and taken to a transit camp at Emmerich in Germany, but escaped and found a rowing boat, in which they made their way down the Rhine and into the Waal to Nijmegen and freedom. From left to right they are: Corporal John Humphreys, Corporal Charles Weir, Lieutenant Dennis Simpson, and Captain Eric Mackay, all of the 1st Parachute Squadron, Royal Engineers; they are shown here recreating the moment of their arrival at Nijmegen for the Daily Herald photographer Jack Esten.** (IWM; HU5416)

MIDDLE: **Personnel of the 1st Airborne Division use parachutes to signal to Allied supply aircraft from the grounds of the Hartenstein Hotel in Oosterbeek, 23 September 1944.** (IWM; BU1119)

On the north bank, the Germans had opened a gas main at the local gas works and ignited it, lighting up the river, the boats and the men. "Those carrying the first boats were met with a withering hail of fire from machine-gunners as they launched their burdens into the fast running water," remembered Sosabowski. "Only one boat was launched and it floated empty and abandoned downstream, because all the crew and passengers had been killed or wounded. Other boats sank into the mud with insufficient men to move them. It would have been madness to stay in what was virtually a death trap and those following were ordered to retire and try from another launching point."


**An officer fires his Enfield No.2 revolver at the Germans from 1st Airborne Division's HQ at the Hartenstein Hotel in Oosterbeek, Arnhem, 23 September 1944.** (HMP)

ABOVE: **A meadow littered with supply parachutes and canisters pictured at Arnhem, after the fighting, on 30 September 1944.** (BUNDESARCHIV, BILD 183-J27758/ CC-BY-SA)

The men stumbled around over the dykes and ditches and the platoons soon became muddled and confused. Nevertheless, a second crossing point was selected and the operation began in earnest.

Throughout the night the Poles tried to cross the Lower Rhine. Sosabowski received report after report of boats getting across and of boats being sunk. Every time he went to look for himself he saw files of stretcher-bearers trudging past him towards the rear. Towards the end of the night a messenger ran up to the major general. He informed Sosabowski that the embarkation point was under heavy fire and that casualties were very heavy. The Embarkation Officer, the Polish commander was told, awaited Sosabowski's orders.

Sosabowski ran down to the embarkation point, where he found that the messenger was not exaggerating: "An inferno of shells, bombs and bullets were dropping right on the [embarkation] spot; there was a hell of a noise, continual flashes, the reek of cordite and cries of anguish from the wounded men. It was impossible to get order out of it and, in fact, not desirable as dawn was not far off. Troops stood bravely at the embarkation point helping men on and wounded bodies off, but I told the officer in charge: 'Stop everything'."[8]

## AT THE END OF THE DAY

Somehow, against the overwhelming odds, the survivors of the 1st Airborne Division had held on for another day. On the evening of the 23rd Urquhart sent a situation report to Browning:

"Many attacks during day by small parties of infantry, SP guns, tanks including flame thrower tanks. Each attack accompanied by very heavy mortaring and shelling within Div perimeter. After many alarms and excursions the latter remains substantially unchanged, although very thinly held. Physical contact not yet made with those on south bank of river. Resupply a flop, small quantities of ammo only gathered in. Still no food and all ranks extremely dirty owing to shortage of water. Morale still adequate, but continue heavy mortaring and shelling is having obvious effects. We shall hold but at the same time hope for a brighter 24 hours ahead."

His hopes would be in vain.

BELOW: **One of the many Stirlings involved in the re-supply missions to Arnhem was this aircraft – 295 Squadron's Mk.IV LK129/8Z-B. It was named *Glorious Beer* by its crew.** (R.S.G. MACKAY)

## NOTES

1. Robert Kershaw, *op. cit.*, pp.325-6.
2. Sosabowski, *op. cit.*, p.176.
3. Arie-Jan van Hees, *op. cit.*, p.259.
4. *Ibid*, pp.264-5.
5. *Ibid* p.267.
6. Mike Peters, "A Glider Pilot at Arnhem", *Britain at War Magazine*, Issue 71 (March 2013), pp.72-77.
7. William Buckingham, *op. cit.*, pp.218-9.
8. Sosabowski, *op. cit.*, pp.179-80.

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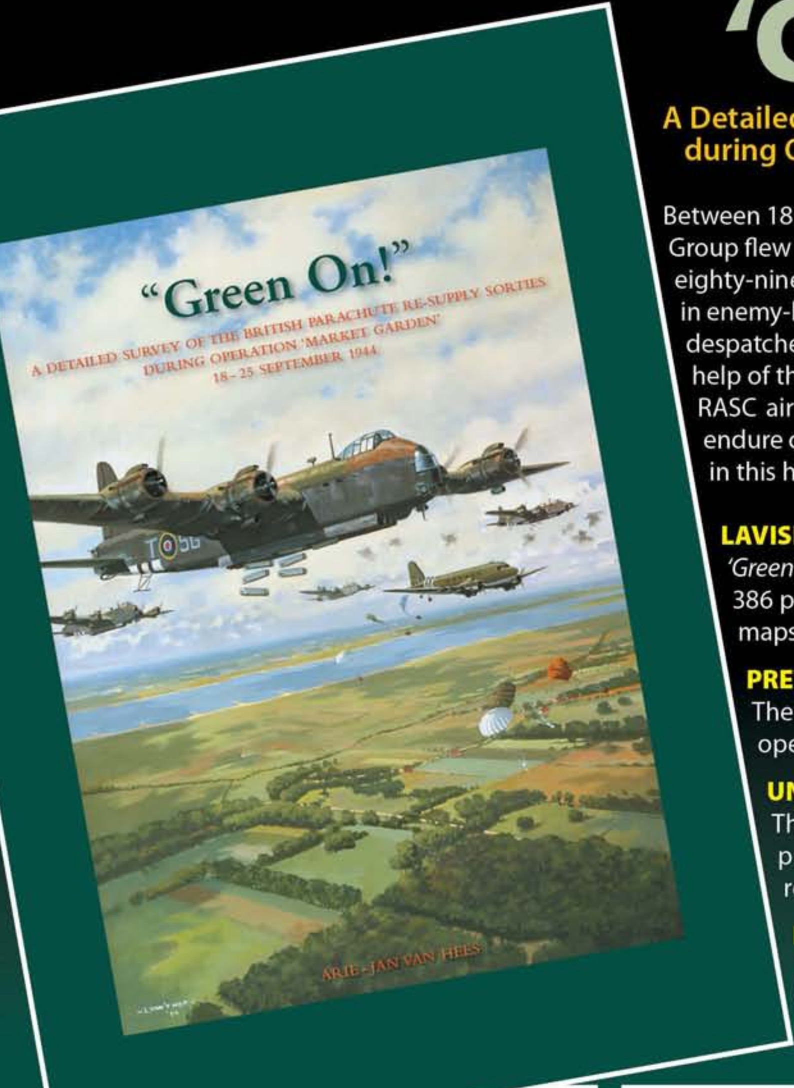
"Green On!"
A DETAILED SURVEY OF THE BRITISH PARACHUTE RE-SUPPLY SORTIES DURING OPERATION 'MARKET GARDEN' 18 - 25 SEPTEMBER 1944
ARIE-JAN VAN HEES

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"They were met by a screen of flak, and it was awe-inspiring to see them fly straight into it, straight into a flaming hell. We thought that some would not face it and would jettison their cargoes, in which case we should get them, for they would fall short and therefore in our lines; but they all stuck to their course and went on, nor did they hesitate." Lieutenant-Colonel Michael St. John Packe, the Commanding Officer RASC of the 1st Airborne Division

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# D+7 SUNDAY.24 SEPTEMBER

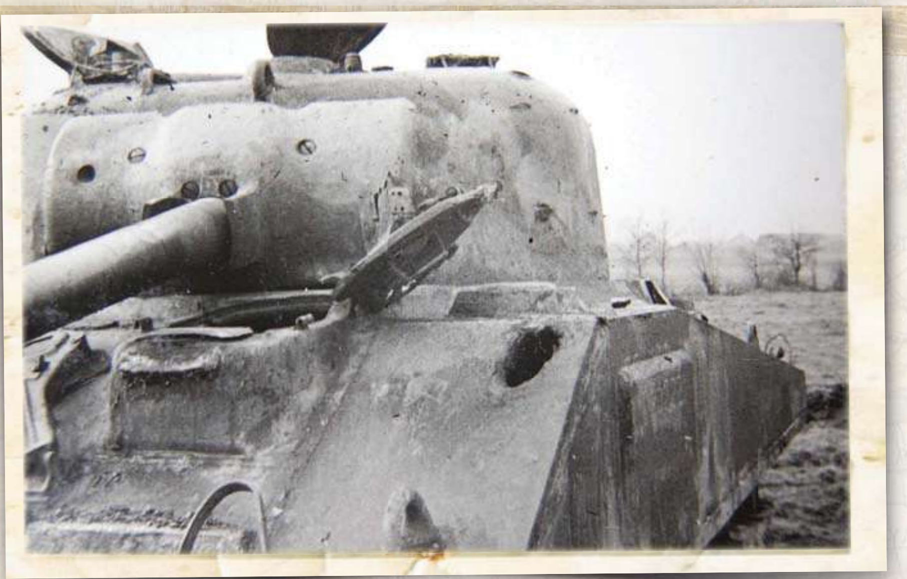
# FIERCE FIGHTING TO THE SOUTH

**The 1st Airborne Division had held out on the northern bank of the Lower Rhine for a full week. Sooner or later they would either have to be relieved or ordered to abandon the operation and evacuate Oosterbeek.**

**THE GERMANS intensified their assaults upon the Oosterbeek perimeter during the early hours of Sunday morning with a mortar bombardment beginning at 01.20 hours and continuing without a break. The few Polish troops that had crossed the Rhine, some 200 in total, were sent to the area that Brigadier Hackett thought the weakest, and were shared between the 4th Parachute Brigade and the 1st Airlanding Brigade where the 1st Airborne Reconnaissance Squadron was defending a sector on the northern perimeter. As Hackett was organising this he was hit by mortar splinters in the stomach and left thigh. The runner that was with him suffered a broken leg.**

Though seriously wounded, Hackett waited for a lull in the mortaring before walking to the divisional aid post, about 100 yards away. When he arrived there, before seeking attention for his own injuries, he saw to the organising of a stretcher party for the runner. Hackett underwent surgery and for a time his life hung in the balance. He pulled through but was destined to spend his recovery period as a prisoner of war. From his bed in St Elisabeth Hospital, he drew up details of recommendations and awards for his men. At the bottom of the list he added a short postscript for Roy Urquhart: "Thank you for the party. It didn't go quite as we hoped and got a bit rougher than we expected but, speaking for myself, I'd take it on again any time and so, I'm sure, would everyone else."[1]

On the eastern side of Oosterbeek the Germans concentrated their efforts at breaking through the



RIGHT: **One of the three Shermans of 'C' Squadron, 44th Royal Tank Regiment knocked out in the German attack. Note how the Jagdpanther appears to have hit this particular tank at least three times.** (COURTESY OF THE POLISH INSTITUTE AND SIKORSKI MUSEUM)

MAIN PICTURE: **A scene of desolation. Damaged or unserviceable Jeeps and associated trailers and equipment lie abandoned in the grounds of the Hartenstein Hotel on 24 September 1944.** (HMP) perimeter below the van Hofwegen laundry which was defended by the South Staffs. "On Sunday some German tanks broke through on the road below us," reported Major Robert Cain, of 'B' Company. "We got another anti-tank gun and one man. I had it manhandled over to fire down to the tanks. It fired one round and then went out of action. So I again went to the gunnery officer and asked for one of his field guns to be sent out. We fired about six rounds into two tanks, one was put out of action, and the other one left."

The attack was also described by Private Ivor Williams who was with 'A' Company: "The Germans came very close to one of the Light Artillery positions near the laundry. My mate Jack Ross and myself were sent there to give support. We set up our Bren gun on top of a trench parapet, and awaited the German attack. When the attack materialised, one of the German tanks headed for us and drove over our slit, flattening the Bren which was now useless. When the attack was over I rearmed myself with a German Mauser rifle."[2]

As the day wore on, whilst the German attacks continued unabated against the northern sector of the perimeter, elsewhere the medium artillery of XXX Corps south of the Lower Rhine largely kept the Germans at bay, with Urquhart able to call down fire whenever it was needed. To the Germans it also seemed that the airborne troops were resisting with even greater determination. "The more the perimeter shrank," *Obersturmbannführer* Walther Harzer, the temporary commander of the 9 S.S. Panzer Division *Hohenstaufen*, later remarked, "the more stubbornly the British troops defended every heap of ruins and every inch of ground."[3]

ABOVE: **Some of the British equipment captured by German troops during *Market Garden*.** (BUNDESARCHIV, BILD 101II-M2KBK-771-13/HÖPPNER/CC-BY-SA)

There was also, at last, some ground support from the RAF. One or two rocket-firing Typhoons had appeared over Oosterbeek on Saturday and this increased on the Sunday, with twenty-two sorties being made. Arranging close aerial support in the absence of a contact car was a complex operation, however. The target information had to be relayed from 1st Airborne, through the 64th Medium Regiment RA to Airborne Corps HQ, then to the Second Army, 2nd Tactical Air Force, and finally to 83 Group RAF. With each sortie the Germans sought shelter and this meant a brief, but very welcome, relief from the bombardment for the men in Oosterbeek.

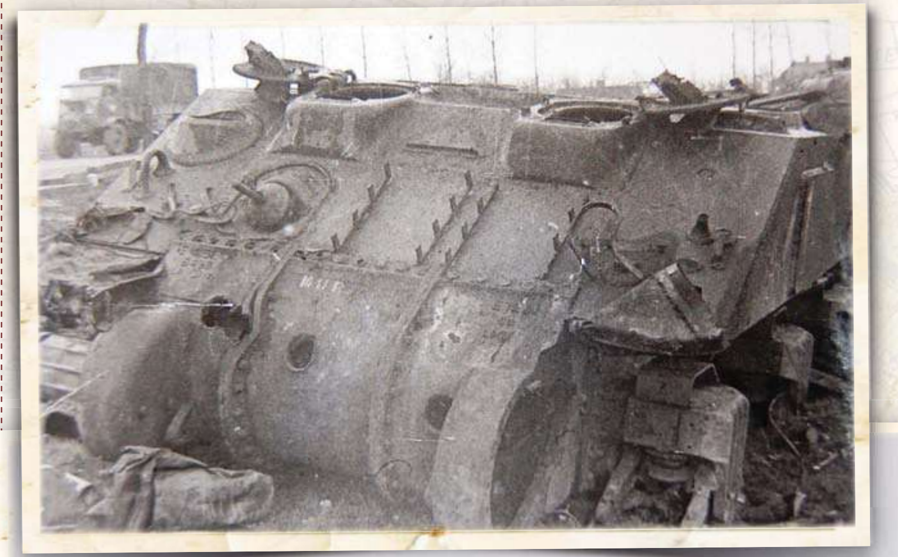
## EVACUATING THE WOUNDED

During the mortar bombardment that morning "the morning hate" as the men called it, one of the dressing stations at the MDS, or Main Dressing Station, crossroads had been hit and set on fire. The wounded occupants, around 150 men, had moved out to sit or lie in the pouring rain with bombs and shells bursting around them.

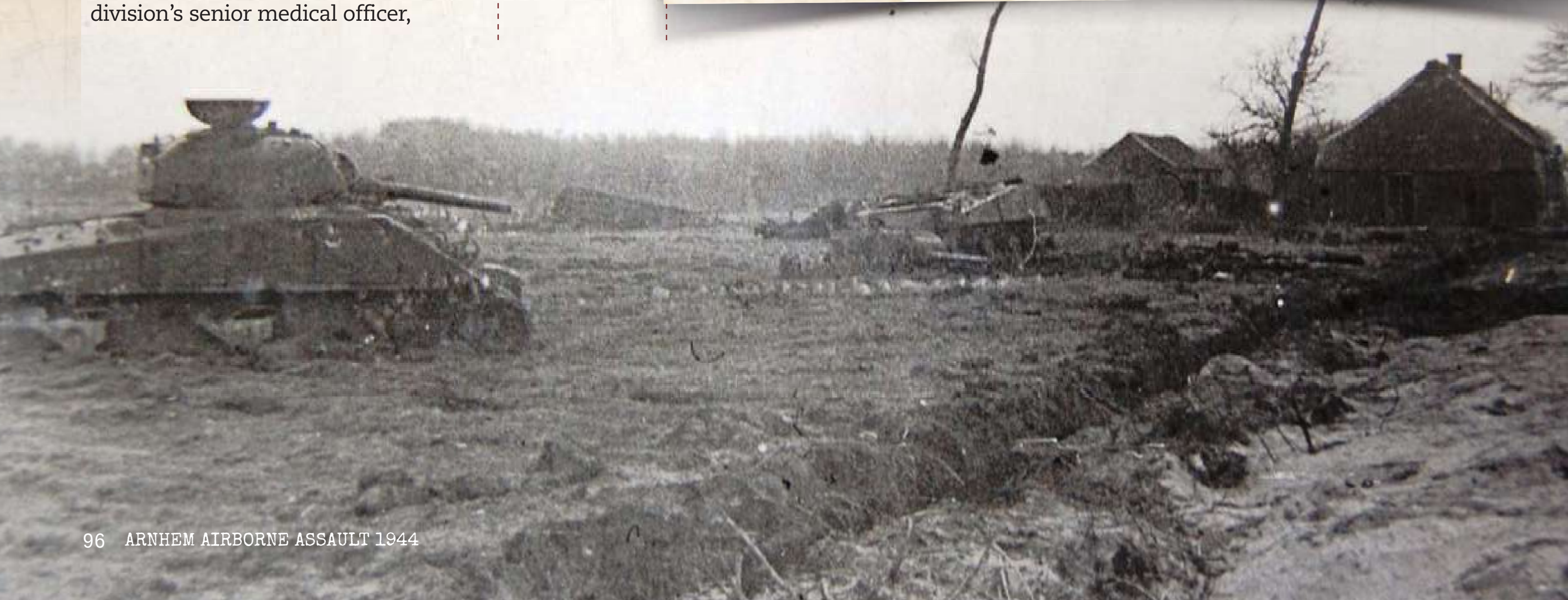
There was scarcely any water or even a blanket to cover the men and some were being wounded a second time as they laid there. Many, who if given proper medical care would survive, also were dying despite all the efforts of the British and German doctors and the Dutch helpers. It was estimated that by this date there was two wounded men within the perimeter for every three men still able to fight. In the Schoonoord Hotel, located at the MDS crossroads (in effect the junction of Utrechtsweg and Stationsweg in Oosterbeek) a German doctor told his British counterpart that he had served in almost every theatre during the war, including Russia, but that this battle was the fiercest he had known.[4]

Colonel Graeme Warrack, the division's senior medical officer, suggested to Urquhart that an attempt should be made to persuade the Germans to evacuate the wounded to hospitals in Arnhem and elsewhere. Urquhart agreed and accompanied by Lieutenant-Commander Arnoldus Wolters, a Dutch Navy officer who was Urquhart's Dutch liaison officer, Warrack went under a Red Cross flag to the Schoonoord Hotel and spoke to the German doctor in charge, SS-*Sturmbannführer* Dr. Egon Skalka.

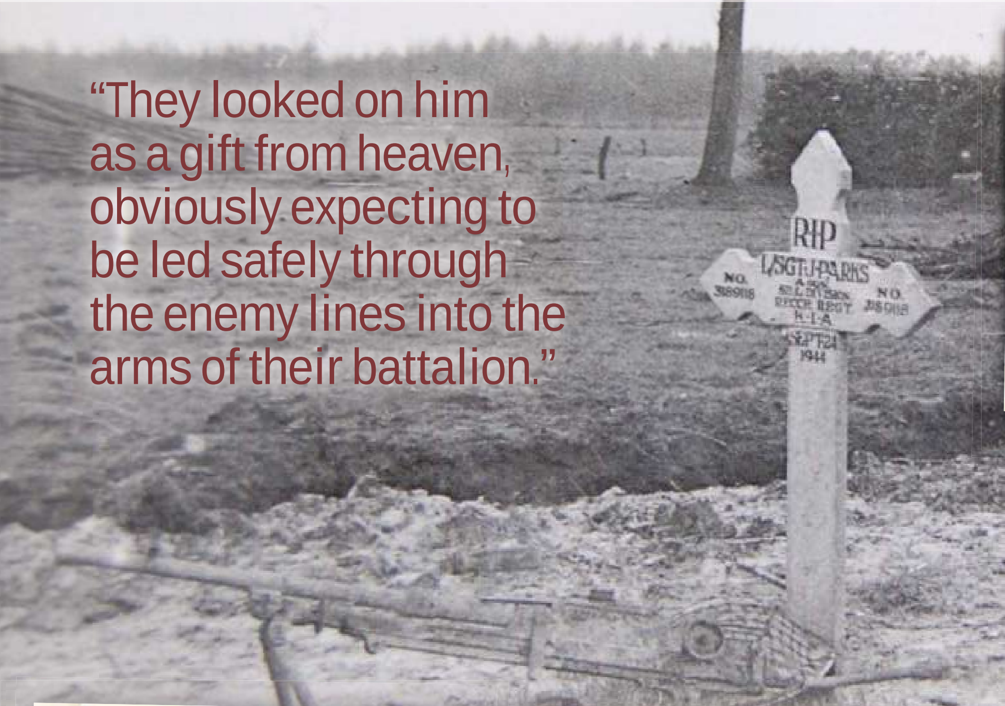
Skalka agreed, but a ceasefire arranged with the German commanders would be needed to move the wounded safely. "They got into a jeep flying the red-cross flag and drove to my command post," recalled *Obersturmbannführer* Harzer. "I was surprised when they arrived because Skalka had not blindfolded Warrack. Warrack now knew the exact location of my HQ. When I pointed this out to Skalka, he laughed and said he would be very much surprised if Warrack could find his way here again. 'Not the way we drove!' he said.



MIDDLE, RIGHT and FAR RIGHT: **Three views of another of the knocked-out Shermans at Koevering. This is the right hand tank in the main picture below.** (COURTESY OF THE POLISH INSTITUTE AND SIKORSKI MUSEUM)



BOTTOM: **As mentioned in the main text, some of the fiercest fighting on the 24th took place not on the banks of the Lower Rhine but some forty miles to the south when the Germans launched a series of counter-attacks at the hamlet of Koevering near Eerde - the latter was held by a battalion of the US 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment. A squadron of the 44th Royal Tank Regiment was sent south from Veghel to help but lost three tanks in quick succession by a Jagdpanther.** (COURTESY OF THE POLISH INSTITUTE AND SIKORSKI MUSEUM)



"They looked on him as a gift from heaven, obviously expecting to be led safely through the enemy lines into the arms of their battalion."

"I spoke to Warrack who requested that the British wounded be evacuated from the perimeter since they no longer had the room or the supplies to take care of them. This meant calling a truce for a couple of hours. I agreed … Warrack looked very haggard and worn. He was offered some cognac but refused because he said it would make him ill. He had not eaten for some time. He was given some sandwiches.

"It was agreed that the British wounded would be brought to the St. Elizabeth Hospital where they would be treated by English and Dutch surgeons. This zone was declared neutral and no guards were set around the hospital. So there were both English and German soldiers here being tended by English, Dutch and Germans, and receiving German supplies."[5]

The Germans did indeed reduce their fire as did the British but it proved difficult to stop the Poles from shooting at any German they saw through their sights. Eventually, 500 men were evacuated, including Hackett.

## "COMPLETE DISINTEGRATION"

Urquhart had compiled a message on Saturday evening, but he withheld it until Sunday morning before transmitting it. "I must warn you," he wrote to Browning, "that unless physical contact in some strength is made with us early 25th September, I consider it unlikely that we can hold out any longer. All ranks are now completely exhausted as a result of eight days continuous effort. Lack of food and water and deficiency in arms combined with high officer casualty rate has had its effect. Even comparatively minor enemy offensive action may cause complete disintegration. Should this become apparent all would be told to break towards the bridgehead, anything rather than surrender. Controlled movement from present position in face of enemy is out of the question now. We have done our best and will continue to do so as long as possible."[6]

German tanks and flamethrower teams systematically destroyed the buildings in the perimeter, room by room, storey by storey, garden by garden, tree by tree. The original eighteen buildings held by the airborne troops had shrunk to just ten.

Sadly, the aerial re-supply scheduled for just eight Dakotas failed. In the end only four aircraft set off and two of those returned to base without reaching the target. The remaining two pressed on and dropped their twenty-eight panniers. None of these, records would indicate, reach the British troops.

TOP: **Two squadrons of the 52nd (Lowland) Reconnaissance Regiment, Reconnaissance Corps, also moving up towards Nijmegen as part of the 52nd (Lowland) Division, became embroiled in the bitter fighting at Koevering. Whilst supporting two companies of the US 502nd Parachute Infantry Regiment, at least one of the 'A' Squadron Daimlar Dingos received a direct hit. Twenty-three-year-old Lance Sergeant James "Jimmy" Park (not Parks as shown on his grave marker) was killed. He was buried on the roadside in the same area where the three knocked-out Shermans lay abandoned.**

TOP RIGHT: **This is believed to be the third of the Shermans of 'C' Squadron, 44th Royal Tank Regiment, knocked out at Koevering.** (BOTH COURTESY OF THE POLISH INSTITUTE AND SIKORSKI MUSEUM)

## XXX CORPS

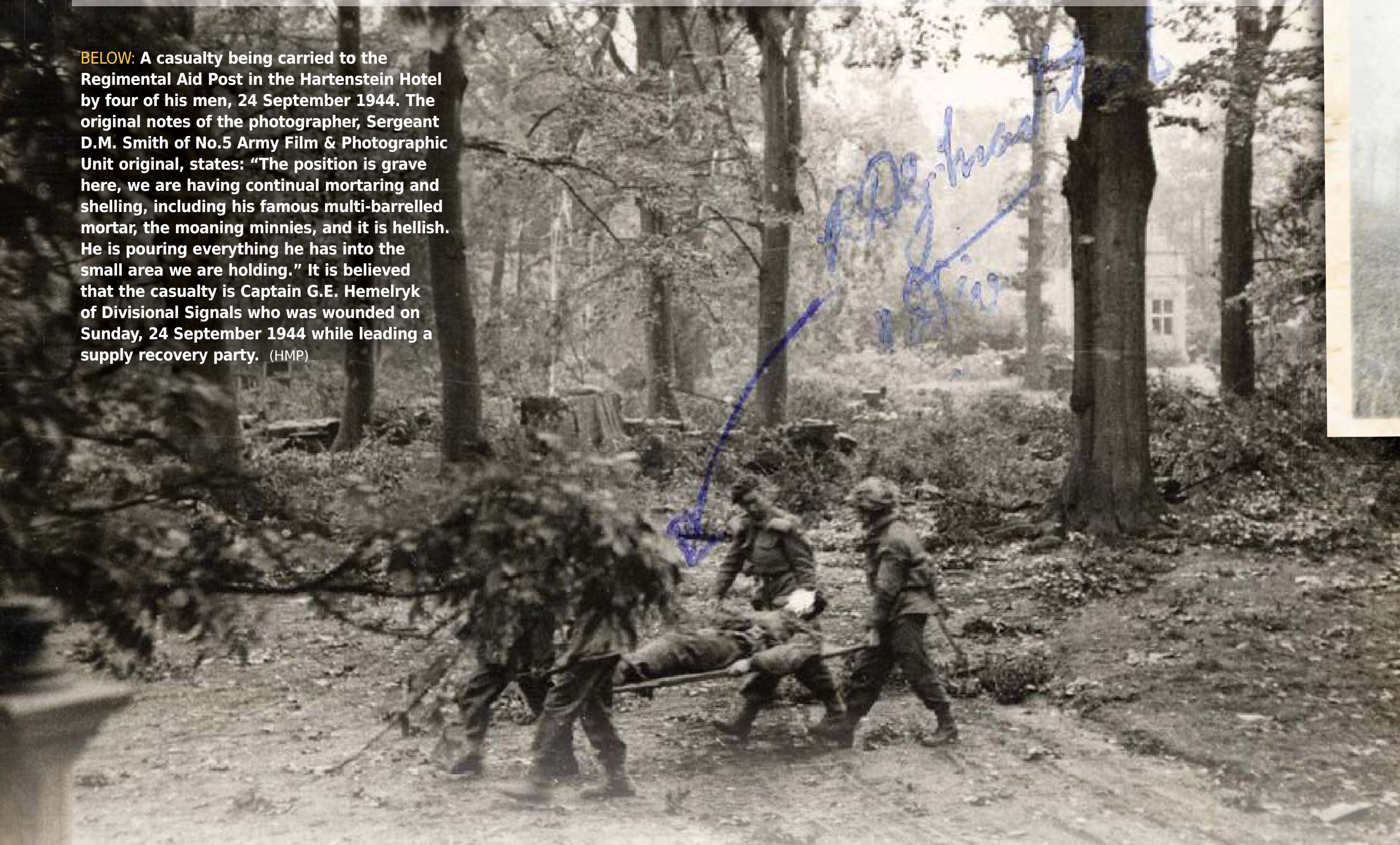
Some of the fiercest fighting of the day took place not on the banks of the Lower Rhine but some forty miles to the south. Early in the morning the Germans struck once again at the Corridor. Approximately 200 infantry supported by five tanks attacked the village of Eerde which was held by a battalion of the US 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment.

A squadron of the 44th Royal Tank Regiment was sent to help but lost three tanks in quick succession. The fighting lasted all morning, much of it a vicious close quarter contest amongst sand dunes.

Amongst those who had been trapped south of Veghel by this latest German attack on the highway was Horrocks who was trying to return to Driel after being summoned to Second Army's HQ. Before he had set off, Horrocks had climbed the tower of Driel church which gave him a better view of Oosterbeek. As he looked across the river, he realised that if the Germans could break through the perimeter along the road by the Rhine, 1st Airborne would be cut off from all potential help.

Afterwards he went to see Major General Thomas and told him that in order to help relieve 1st Airborne he must send at least one battalion across the river which should establish itself on high ground to the west of the Airborne Division. Once ▷▷

# D+7: SUNDAY.24 SEPTEMBER FIERCE FIGHTING TO THE SOUTH



BELOW: **A casualty being carried to the Regimental Aid Post in the Hartenstein Hotel by four of his men, 24 September 1944. The original notes of the photographer, Sergeant D.M. Smith of No.5 Army Film & Photographic Unit original, states: "The position is grave here, we are having continual mortaring and shelling, including his famous multi-barrelled mortar, the moaning minnies, and it is hellish. He is pouring everything he has into the small area we are holding." It is believed that the casualty is Captain G.E. Hemelryk of Divisional Signals who was wounded on Sunday, 24 September 1944 while leading a supply recovery party.** (HMP)

ABOVE RIGHT (OPPOSITE PAGE): **During the fighting in the vicinity of the village of Eerde the men of the 1st Battalion, 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment captured a German self-propelled gun. This is described as being "a rather unusual specimen" in that it consisted of a Czech 4.7cm gun mounted on a captured French tank chassis. After its capture, the vehicle was driven to the 506th's Command Post where it was inspected by Colonel Robert Sink (of *Band of Brothers* fame). It is likely that the vehicle pictured here is that one prior to it being moved from the battlefield.** (COURTESY OF THE POLISH INSTITUTE AND SIKORSKI MUSEUM)

ABOVE: **The former Hotel Tafelberg in Oosterbeek. It was being used as *Generalfeldmarschall* Walter Model's HQ at the time of the initial airborne landings on 17 September 1944. Model, thinking that he was the target of the airborne operation, departed within minutes, the building then being evacuated. By the evening of the 18th, the Tafelberg was the location of a British dressing station and an operating facility (the latter operated by the 181st (Airlanding) Field Ambulance RAMC). By the 21st, the Tafelberg was passing in and out of German hands. Though it has recently undergone conversion to private apartments, work which involved substantial alterations to the building's structure, it is stated that bloodstains from the fighting of 1944 can still be seen on sections of the solid granite floor.** (COURTESY OF PIN VAN TEND)

a bridgehead had been secured the 43rd Division was to pass stores across and, if time permitted, the rest of the Polish Brigade, which had been placed temporarily under his command, should then be sent over the river.

Horrocks also asked him to conduct a reconnaissance farther to the west in the hope that, if everything went well, the 43rd Division could "side-slip" across the Lower Rhine "and carry out a left hook" against the German forces attacking the Oosterbeek perimeter. He promised Thomas the full support of all the Corps' artillery.

In the afternoon the Germans again severed the Hell's Highway six miles north of Son. The US paratroopers were unable to regain possession of the road which was held by the Germans for two days. This was long enough for the Germans to destroy fifty vehicles and seed the road with mines.[7]

## THE 43RD DIVISION

Following Horrock's orders to Thomas, the 4th Battalion the Dorsetshire Regiment was detailed to be the first unit of the 43rd Division to make the crossing. To show his company commanders the proposed crossing point, Lieutenant Colonel Gerald Tilly took them up the Driel church tower. There was little they could see of the river bank as it was obscured by trees right down to the edge of the water. Tilly did not underestimate the task they faced. "Gentlemen," he said to his officers, "we've bought it this time."

The day was spent preparing for the night crossing. All four rifle companies and part of the Support Company were to cross as soon as the boats arrived. Incredibly, the men in the ranks were unaware of the situation across the river. "We didn't know there were people over there who needed rescuing," recalled Lance Corporal Denis Longmate. "We had no idea about how bad it was for the paras and the Airborne on the other side of the river."

Late that afternoon they were told that they would be moving off after dark and, without explanation, the men were told to take off their greatcoats even though it was cold and damp. All they were permitted to carry was a small pack, an entrenching tool and their personal weapons. They were sent into the woods by the river bank where they stopped, and were told to rest.

There they waited and waited. Night came and some men even fell asleep. Then a cry went up that the 3-tonners had arrived with the boats. "Boats? What boats, and why?" asked a mystified Longmate. "We hadn't been briefed about what we were going to be doing with boats."

As with almost everything else

ABOVE RIGHT: **A soldier of 1st Airborne Division watches as a jeep burns after being hit by a mortar shell in the grounds of the Hartenstein Hotel, 24 September 1944.** (HMP)

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LEFT: **A remarkable relic of Operation *Market Garden* – the hunting horn carried by Major Frost into Arnhem and which he used to rally his troops on 17 September. The horn was lost when Frost was wounded and captured at the bridge in Arnhem. There it remained until July 1945 when it was found by a worker helping to clear the debris at the bridge. Having "noticed something glinting amongst the rubble", Mr E.R. Oosterwijk "took it home, cleaned it up, beat out some of the dents, and kept it for many years until September 1997 when he presented it to the [Airborne] Museum. Unfortunately, it was stolen from the museum in August 1998, and remained missing for more than two years. Having been tracked down, it is once more on public display in The Airborne Museum 'Hartenstein' in Oosterbeek.** (HMP)

with Operation *Garden* the boats were late reaching the Rhine and the crossing began at 01.00 hours, three hours behind schedule. In the dark the Dorsets unloaded the plywood boats and lined up for their orders. They were told that they would be going through the woods to the river: "No noise, no talking and watch your step. Then you are to cross to the other side and bring out as many Airborne as you can find."[8]

## THE CROSSING

Fewer boats were available than had been anticipated which meant that the planned crossing by the Polish Brigade had to be cancelled and all the boats handed over to the Dorsets. Each boat was crewed by two sappers of either 204 or 553 Field Companies, Royal Engineers who would paddle the boats back and forth across the Lower Rhine. Each boat carried ten infantrymen together with ammunition and supplies for four days. The operation began with the promised artillery bombardment to keep the Germans' heads down but the shells set two large buildings on fire in Heveadorp which cast a "ruddy glow" over the river.

Machine-guns then opened up on the now illuminated boats. At least one was sunk and others were swept downstream.

The Border Regiment, holding the south-western sector of the perimeter was told to provide a reception party for the Dorsets. Accompanying the Dorsets was the 1st Border Regiment's commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Hadden, and his Intelligence Officer, Lieutenant Ronald Hope-Jones. Their glider had failed them on the first air lift with the battalion on D-Day and in their second attempt on Monday, 18 September, the tug was shot down by flak over Holland – luckily the glider force-landed in Allied-held territory. They were able to unload the Jeep the glider was carrying and they made their way to the front. The Dorsets crossing gave them a chance to rejoin their battalion.

The two Border officers were in the second wave of boats. They reached the far bank upstream of the Driel ferry. Everyone piled out of the boat but found the bank in front of them was steep and thickly wooded. They came under sporadic fire from inside the wood so the party split up. One account of the 1st Borders details the movements of Lieutenant Hope-Jones who went along the river bank to the east and bumped into a rather frightened platoon of the Dorsets. "They looked on him as a gift from heaven, obviously expecting to be led safely through the enemy lines into the arms of their battalion."

Hope-Jones hardly felt qualified for the task but nevertheless he went to the front and led the platoon up the bank and through the undergrowth. "It was extremely steep and the sandy soil made him slip back 2 feet for every 3 he climbed. After struggling through the brambles for what seemed to be an eternity, he heard a movement a few yards in front and above him and at once challenged 'British or German?'. The only answer was a remark in German, passed from one man to another. Throwing a couple of grenades and shouting 'Charge!' he tried to rush the position up the slope.

"By the time he reached the Germans they were either dead, or feigning so. By now some of the Dorsets had struggled up to him and there was more small arms fire being aimed at the party, both from the right and the left; he fired back with his Sten."[9]

Clearing the Germans from his front, Hope-Jones found that the Dorsets had a Platoon Officer with them, so he no longer felt obliged to be their unofficial guide. He left them and strode out alone to find his battalion.

The actual landings had been virtually unopposed but the German machine-guns continued to wreak havoc upon the boats and, with casualties mounting, at 02.15 hours the operation was called off. By that time seventeen officers and 298 men had been shipped across to the Rhine, though not all had reached the north bank.

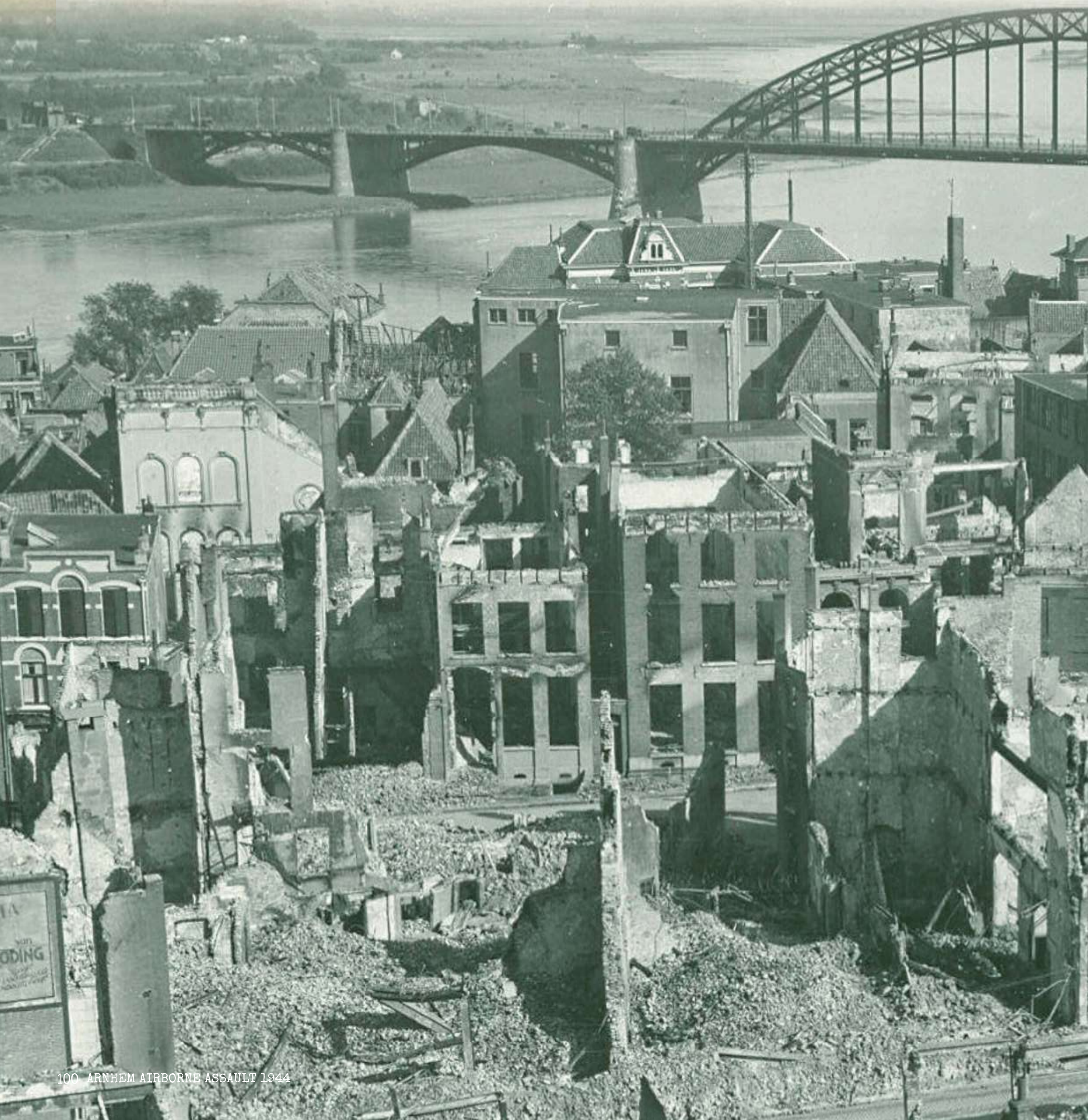
## NOTES

1. John Fairley, *Remember Arnhem* (Peaton Press, Glasgow, 1978), pp.177-8.
2. Alexander Junier and Bart Smulders, *By Land, Sea and Air: An Illustrated History of the Battalion The South Staffordshire Regiment 1940-1945* (Sigmond, Renkum, 2003), pp.145-6.
3. Geoffrey Powell, *The Devil's Birthday, The Bridges to Arnhem 1944* (Leo Cooper, London, 1993), p.208.
4. *Ibid*, p.210.
5. Quoted on the following excellent and informative website: www.pegasusarchive.org
6. John O'Reilly, *156 Parachute Battalion From Delhi to Arnhem* (Thornton, Nottingham, 2009), p.260.
7. Rick Atkinson, *op. cit.*, p.282.
8. Nichol and Rennel, *Arnhem, The Battle for Survival*, (Viking, London, 2011), pp.216-7.
9. Stuart Eastwood, Charles Gray and Alan Green, *When Dragons Flew, An Illustrated history of The 1st Battalion The Border Regiment 1939-45* (Silver Link, Kettering, 2009), pp.167-8.

# D+8 MONDAY. 25 SEPTEMBER

# EVACUATION

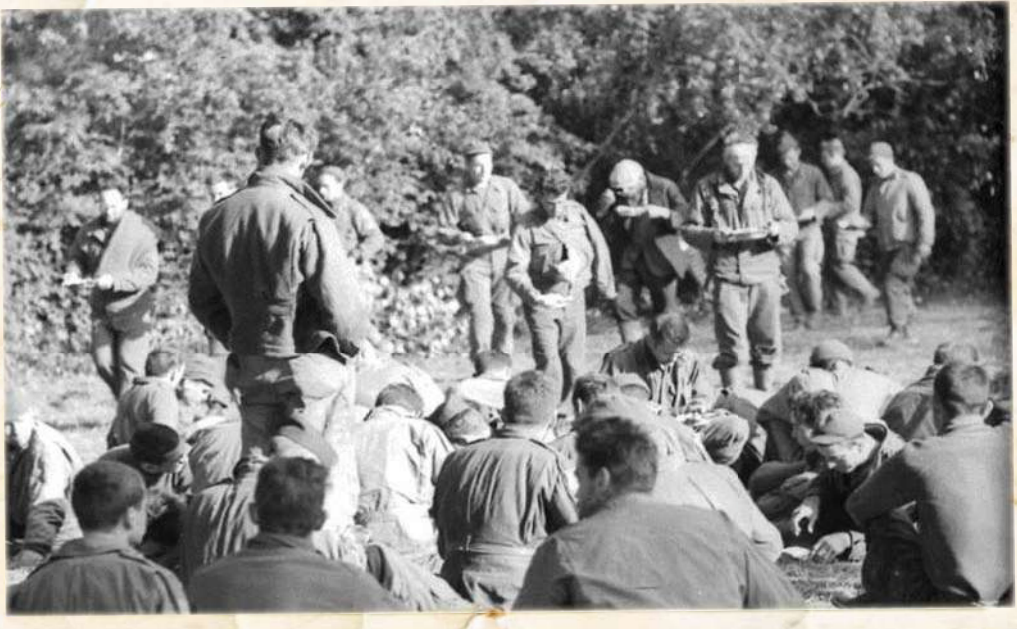
MAIN PICTURE: **The fighting surrounding Operation *Market Garden* had a devastating effect on the Dutch population, as well as the villages, towns and cities in which they lived. This is the view of the damage caused to Nijmegen during the war, pictured on 28 September 1944.** (US NATIONAL ARCHIVES)



**It was decision time. The men had done all that had been asked of them and more, yet it was evident that XXX Corps was not going to be able to cross the Lower Rhine. Was there anything to be gained from leaving the 1st Airborne Division stranded, or should the Allies cut their losses and try to save as many men as possible?**

**THE LANDING of the Dorsets was nothing short of a disaster. In the dark the men became hopelessly disorganised. Even Lieutenant Colonel Gerald Tilly, the 4th Battalion's CO, was separated from the rest of his men for a long period before he was found still in the woods by the river just to the east of Heveadorp by Major Philip Roper with twenty men of 'C' Company. What happened next was described by Private Aubrey Steirn, a member of 'C' Company:**

"At first light we decided to move further into the woods and attempt to gain contact with other members of the battalion. I was in the lead when a machine-gun opened up on me from a very short distance. I was knocked over ... I came to in one piece, apart from a facial wound and badly bruised shoulder where a burst of fire had 'clipped' me and left metal fragments in my uniform. In the meantime the German had been dealt with, and we moved on and encountered more fragments of the unit ... We occupied



ABOVE: **Allied personnel, who appear to be mainly, if not entirely, American, captured during Operation *Market Garden*.** (BUNDESARCHIV, BILD 101I-590-2333-20A/APPE[ARPPE]/CC-BY-SA)

LEFT: **Surviving examples of the tape used to mark out the various withdrawal routes during the final evacuations from Arnhem. These rolls of tape are on display in the excellent Airborne Museum Hartenstein.** (HMP)

LEFT: **A German soldier at Arnhem wearing a captured British camouflage face veil. Often used as a scarf, the face veil was intended to be used as a tool to aid personal camouflage. When draped over the head, the man could see out whilst concealing his face, or when tied over his personal equipment it would break up his outline. Issued from 1942 on a limited basis, these became a standard item of equipment for all Airborne troops.** (BUNDESARCHIV, BILD 101II-M2KBK-771-12/HÖPPNER/CC-BY-SA)

German trenches in the area and continued to operate until completely surrounded, when the CO was forced to surrender.”[1]

Lieutenant Hope-Jones, the 1st Border Regiment’s Intelligence Officer, had tried to work eastwards along the river to Oosterbeek. Despite the fact that he had come under fire occasionally, though no shots had come near him, he was unable to find a way through the German lines; he had also run out of ammunition. It was clear to him that he was never going to be able to get back to his battalion, and that his only hope of survival was to join up with the Dorsets. He eventually found the Dorsets’ main position where the men were digging in for all they were worth. “The machine-gun and mortar fire became more intense, and in the distance the rumble of tanks could be heard. This went on for an hour or two, then to everyone’s astonishment there was a cry of ‘Cease fire!’ from behind them. Two officers, one English and one German, came down to the position and told the men that the CO of 4 Dorsets had surrendered the Battalion. Hope-Jones was never more surprised in his life.”[2]

The Dorsets were scattered all along the north bank around Heveadorp in little groups. Some attempted to swim back across the river but found the current too strong. Of the 315 men who attempted the crossing, thirteen died and around 200 were taken prisoner. “I’m afraid things didn’t go very well that night,” Horrocks said of the night of the 24th. “The Dorsets were put across and they fought very gallantly but next morning all communication with them had ceased. We were getting desperately short of assault boats.”[3]

## IN THE CAULDRON

The 25th saw a very heavy bombardment of the Allied positions near the Van Hofwegen laundry held by Major Cain’s group of the South Staffs. At least five men were killed and many more wounded. Later the Germans attacked this sector with self-propelled guns, flamethrower tanks, and infantry. By this time there were no more PIATs available to the Major, let alone any ammunition for them. Undeterred, he armed himself with a two-inch mortar and continued to bombard the attackers. Private Luis DiMarco, a 1st Parachute Battalion signalman, was involved in this little battle where he found himself and one other man in a house on the Weverstraat with a German tank in front.

“With the Tank at the front of the house and a German machine-gunner covering the back we were trapped in the house. Then another Tank started working its way slowly down the Weverstraat, using a flame thrower to systematically set fire to the houses. Fortunately, smoke from the burning houses drifted over the back gardens, which gave us the cover we needed to make our escape.

“I ended up in a shallow trench … From there I watched Major Robert Cain try to fire a two-inch mortar over the house onto a Tank. Whilst he was doing so, tracer fire from a German machine-gun was flying about him. He then moved further back and with two others, using a shovel with a long handle, tried to position a Howitzer gun to fire on the Tank. This was abandoned. However the tracer fire was still flying past and the Major and the two soldiers disappeared from sight.”

After a fight that lasted at least three hours the South Staffs had given no ground and at last drove the enemy off in complete disorder. By the end of the battle, Cain had been responsible for the destruction or disabling of six tanks as well as a number of self-propelled guns. Major Robert Henry

ABOVE: **The Dakota crews of 437 Squadron RCAF were thrown into the maelstrom of the Arnhem battle a little over two weeks after forming, at which point it had the distinction of being the only Royal Canadian Air Force squadron in Transport Command. Indeed, twelve of the squadron's fifteen Dakotas were deployed during the First Lift of *Market Garden.* By its end the Battle of Arnhem had claimed the lives of twelve aircrew (not including four air despatchers who were killed) and a further four who were taken prisoner.** (RCAF ARCHIVES)

Cain was awarded the Victoria Cross.[4] This meant that the South Staffs had earned two VCs in one battle – the only battalion to do so in the Second World War.

The South Staffs had been helped by the accurate fire of the 25-pounders and medium guns of the Royal Artillery from across the river. "It was in fact uncomfortably close and we suffered some casualties from our own shell fire but the Germans had got pretty close too and the barrage completely broke up their attack," ran the words of an official account of the South Staffs. "Some of the enemy infantry had, however, succeeded in establishing themselves in a house about 15 yds from our forward post. There was a sharp grenade fight between our troops and the Germans but the matter was clinched by a 75mm gun which took on the target at 70yds and the house disintegrated. Only one German managed to get away. After this some tanks which had penetrated the perimeter to the north of the Staffords' area, shot our positions from the rear. The 75mm drove them off, and this proved to be a final crisis."[5] It was the final crisis because the decision had been taken to put an end to the pointless slaughter.

## THE LAST DROP

On 22 September Air Commodore Darvall, Air Officer Commanding 46 Group, had visited the forward airfields to assess the re-supply efforts and had discussed the situation with Horrocks and Browning. He came to the conclusion that the best way to both avoid anti-aircraft fire and to drop supplies more accurately, was to use fighters. This was attempted on the 25th, along with a limited supply drop by eight Dakotas.

There was also good support for the ground troops, made possible because a solid radio link had finally been established through the 64th Medium Regiment RA to the 2nd Tactical Air Force. The aircraft of 2 TAF flew no less than 674 sorties during the day, many of which (160) were in direct support of the troops north of the Lower Rhine. Other sorties were flown over Nijmegen to keep German aircraft at a distance so that they could not destroy the bridge.

## THE DECISION TO EVACUATE

The men of the Dorset Regiment were not the only ones that had crossed the Lower Rhine during the early hours of Monday morning. Six DUKWs loaded with medical supplies and ammunition also made the attempt, though only three got as far as the crossing point. The three that did cross landed downstream and none of the goods they carried reached the Airborne troops and many of the men in the DUKWs were rounded up by the Germans.

Travelling in one of the DUKWs was Lieutenant Colonel Eddie Myers who was on a separate and special mission. He managed to avoid capture and waded along the riverbank until he reached Oosterbeek. He was taken to Urquhart's headquarters, arriving there at 06.05 hours.

Myers was carrying three letters which he handed over to the major general. One of the letters was from Major-General Thomas informing Urquhart that the decision had been taken to abandon the plan to reinforce the bridgehead over the Rhine.

"Lieutenant General Horrocks faced the facts," Thomas recorded. "The position held by the Airborne Division had the riverbank, which ran dead straight for over a mile. The enemy held the high ground overlooking the river and the approaches to it. It would therefore be impossible to bring bridging lorries down in daylight. Even if a bridge were built it would be under direct fire from the opposite bank above and below the bridge site. He therefore instructed 43rd Division to carry out the evacuation." Urquhart and Thomas were to arrange between them the evacuation of the 1st Airborne Division when they considered it practical. It would be called Operation *Berlin.*

After giving the matter considerable thought Urquhart informed Thomas that he wanted to evacuate that night. At 10.30 hours, Urquhart called his senior officers together to discuss the evacuation plan. All were bitterly disappointed with the news that after all they had endured the operation was to be abandoned and would therefore be considered a failure. In order to preserve morale amongst

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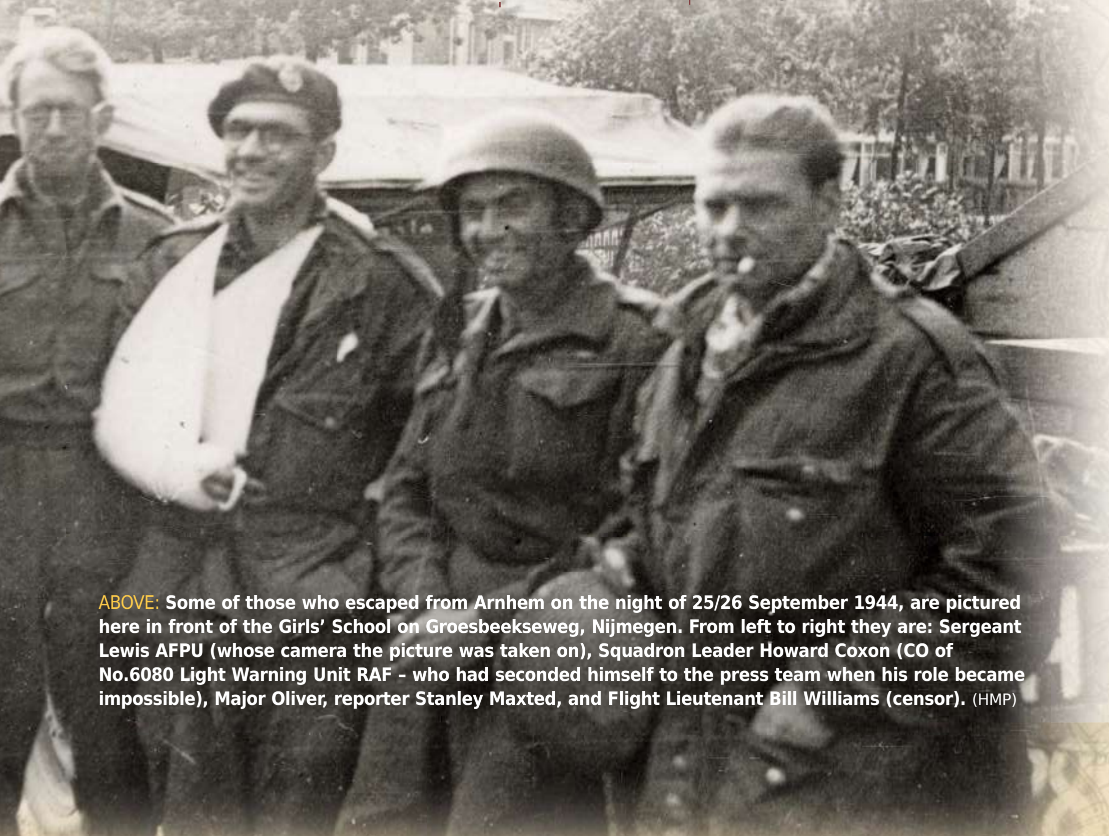
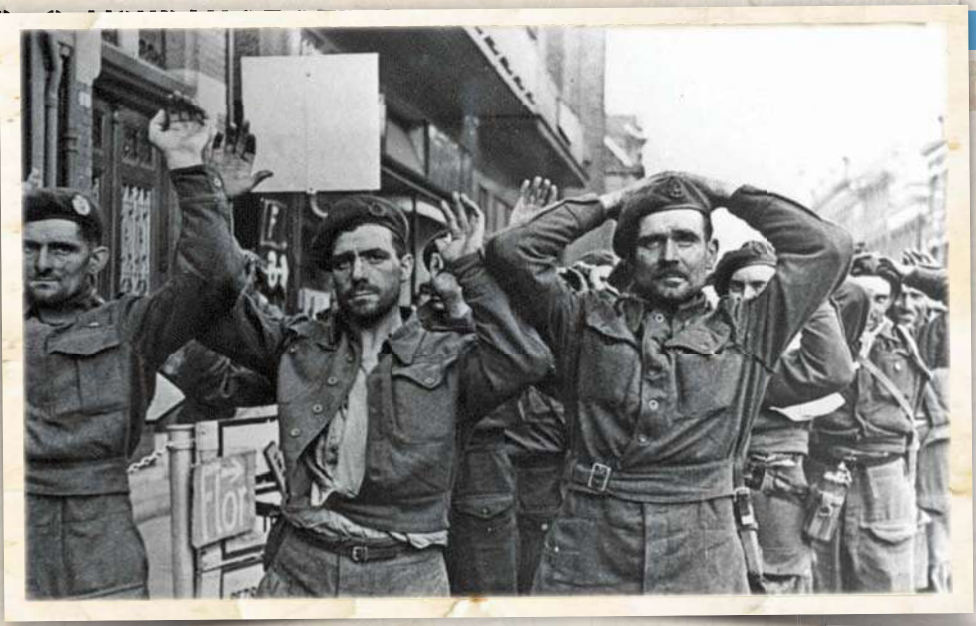


ABOVE: **Some of those who escaped from Arnhem on the night of 25/26 September 1944, are pictured here in front of the Girls' School on Groesbeekseweg, Nijmegen. From left to right they are: Sergeant Lewis AFPU (whose camera the picture was taken on), Squadron Leader Howard Coxon (CO of No.6080 Light Warning Unit RAF – who had seconded himself to the press team when his role became impossible), Major Oliver, reporter Stanley Maxted, and Flight Lieutenant Bill Williams (censor).** (HMP)



TOP: **Some of those who did not escape from Arnhem. These British PoWs were pictured on the Steenstraat in Arnhem after being captured at the road bridge.** (BUNDESARCHIV, BILD 183-S73820/ CC-BY-SA)

the troops, and for reasons of security, the evacuation was to be kept secret until the evening. The troops would withdraw progressively from the northern end of the perimeter, leaving active pickets to simulate a continuing defence. The medical personnel were to stay with the wounded and the military police would guard the German prisoners until the last moment. The river crossing would begin at 22.00 hours.[6]

## OPERATION BERLIN

To cover the withdrawal it was arranged for the whole of XXX Corps' artillery to fire heavy concentrations just beyond the perimeter. The complex fire plan took two artillery officers six hours to calculate.

Every effort would be made to convince the Germans that the 1st Airborne Division was still fighting. This included Signalman James Cockrill operating his radio to give the impression that the division was still active in Oosterbeek. His only instructions were to keep his set on the air as long as possible.

The 43rd Division would also play its part. Lieutenant-Colonel Mark Henniker, the divisional engineer, had devised a scheme to distract the Germans. Under the command of Major Thixton of the Royal Army Service Corps, a column was to drive up to the river from the west, complete with pontoons and bridging lorries, making a great deal of noise so that the Germans would think that a crossing was about to be made there. "I want you to be seen and shot at, Thrixton – that's all," was the order he received from Henniker.[7]

Control of the crossing was given to the 130th Brigade, with the engineers of the division actually overseeing the ferrying operation. There would be two crossing points with the sappers of 260 Field Company RE manning the sixteen collapsible, canvas assault boats on the eastern crossing which was roughly in line with the centre of the perimeter. Helping in the operation were the men of 23 Field Company, Royal Canadian Engineers, who had with them fourteen wooden storm boats complete with outboard motors.

The western crossing, which was half a mile downstream from the Heveadorp ferry point, included a similar number of boats, these being manned by 533 Field Company RE and the Canadians from 20 Field Company RCE. Whilst all this was taking place the 129th Brigade was to conduct a diversionary operation to the west near Heteren.

Tracer shells were also to be fired from the south bank at a rate of one round a minute alternately in pairs for seven hours by a battery of light anti-aircraft guns to help guide the evacuees.

## THE EVACUATION BEGINS

"The night was made for clandestine exits," remembered Urquhart. "It was very dark with an inky sky and there was a strong wind and persistent heavy rain. In their muddy ditches and foxholes and slit trenches, saturated men found themselves glad of the rain which would deaden the noise and help our chances."

ABOVE: **A German anti-aircraft gun in action against ground targets during the fighting at Arnhem.** (BUNDESARCHIV, BILD 101I-590-2333-23A/APPE[ARPPE]/ CC-BY-SA)

The men blackened their faces with ashes and mud and they muffled their boots and any equipment that might rattle, such as bayonets, with rags. "Two floodwalls blocked the path from the off loading area [of the boats] to the launching sites," explained Major Michael Tucker of 23 Field Company, RCE. "The first of these was about twenty feet high with banks sloping to about forty-five degrees; the second was about half the height and the slope much less severe. These obstacles became most difficult to negotiate. The heavy rain softened the ground and the churning of the men's feet, as they struggled over with the storm boats, soon created a slippery mess, which lent no footing whatsoever. Hand ropes were fixed but even with these the going was extremely difficult."[8]

White tape was laid along the two routes down to the river and the men of the Glider Pilot Regiment were given the task of directing the evacuating troops down to the crossing points. They stood in line fifty yards apart all the way down to the river at both crossing points and their job was to point the way to the next man in line.

The bombardment opened at 21.00 hours with "overwhelming effect" from the whole of the 43rd Division's artillery, added to by mortars and machine-guns of the 8th Battalion the Middlesex Regiment. "Wave after wave of shells whistled by just above

BELOW: **A German 2cm anti-aircraft gun (on the far right) firing at one of the re-supply aircraft over Arnhem.** (BUNDESARCHIV, BILD 101II-M2KBK-772-38/HÖPPNER/CC-BY-SA)

ABOVE: **Major Dick Lonsdale, Second-in-Command of the 11th Parachute Battalion and commander of Lonsdale Force, pictured receiving a light from Lieutenant David Polley, commander of 'C' Section, 1st Airborne Divisional Signals, after the pair had both escaped across the Rhine on the night of 25/26 September 1944. Lonsdale crossed by boat (at 04.45 hours) whilst Polley swam across. This picture was taken on the steps of the Girls' School in Nijmegen on 26 September 1944.** (HMP)

the trees," remembered Sergeant Humphreys of the 156th Parachute Battalion, "each shell exploding with a flash of light around the Perimeter area".

The 156th moved through Oosterbeek, as Sergeant Noel Rosenberg recounted: "We pushed on passing a damaged church and within a short distance we were crossing some polder [low-lying] land. There was an awful smell carried on the damp air. Huge humps appeared and when we got closer I could see that they were the carcasses of cows. Until now it had never crossed my mind that animals too were victims in this battle."[9]

## THE WALKING WOUNDED

Urquhart had said that the wounded should be left behind to be tended to by the Germans but Robert Taylor Watkins, the Methodist chaplain of the 1st Battalion, argued that the walking wounded should be given a chance to evacuate. He specified that they should be men who were physically and mentally strong enough to be able to make what everyone knew would be an arduous trip. They were told that they should not expect any privileges and they should not hinder the evacuation of the fit men.

His 'flock' paraded at 23.30 hours as instructed. "I was a bit taken aback by many of them. They looked such wrecks," Watkins declared. "There were even men with chest wounds, unable to hold themselves erect."

They moved off, each man holding the tail of the smock of the man in front. "They were so slow and so weak that it seemed scarcely possible that many of them would get far."

By this stage of the evacuation the Germans had realised that some form of operation was being undertaken and they laid down a heavy fire along the river bank. Everyone had to lie flat in the mud, including the walking wounded, whilst they waited their turn in the boats. Watkins knew that some of them must have suffered terribly in doing this. "There were some men on that evacuation beach that night that lost their heads," claimed Watkins. "But not the walking wounded. They kept their discipline, and not a single one of them was lost on that crossing." In all fairness to the other soldiers, some stood aside to let the wounded onto the boats ahead of them.[10]

Some of the storm boats were swept downstream by the strong current and some struggled far off course. In a few, the engines failed and the men used their rifle butts as paddles. Lieutenant Colonel Myers was in charge of the operation on the north bank and he informed the waiting Urquhart that almost half the boats had been lost on the first crossing.

Urquhart lay in the mud of the river bank until the crisp order was given for his party to move forward. "I climbed aboard from the sodden, slippery groyne. It was a tight squeeze and the boat was low in the water," he later wrote. "Spandaus covered the river and metal splashed into the water as we seemed to go all too slowly across the two hundred yards towards the south bank."[11]

When Urquhart's boat was about half-way across the engine stopped, and the boat began to drift. Luckily the engine was re-started and the Airborne Division's commander reached the south bank. There doctors, medical orderlies and Dutch Red Cross personnel were ready to receive the wounded and exhausted men and ambulances and trucks waited to take the weary Airborne troops down to Nijmegen. ●

## NOTES

1. Martin Middlebrook, *op. cit*, p.421.
2. Stuart Eastwood, *et al*, *op. cit*, p.168.
3. Major and Mrs Holt, *op. cit*, p.267.
4. Quoted on: www.pegasusarchive.org
5. Quoted on: www.paradata.org.uk
6. David Bennett, *op. cit.*, p.182.
7. Charles Whiting, *op. cit*, pp.221-2.
8. Mike Peters and Luuk Buist, *Glider Pilots at Arnhem* (Pen & Sword, Barnsley, 2009), p.277.
9. John O'Reilly, *op. cit*, pp.273-4. Rosenberg had been promoted from Lance Corporal in the field at Arnhem.
10. John Nichol and Tony Rennell, *Arnhem*, *op. cit*, pp.263-4.
11. Urquhart, *op. cit*, pp.175-6.

BELOW: **During the Arnhem operation this Stirling IV of the RAF Harwell-based 570 Squadron, LK140/V8-E, was flown by Flying Officer Spafford's crew.** (H.D. CHERRINGTON)

**THE SUCCESS that Chaplain Watkins had experienced with the walking wounded encouraged him to try and get a few more injured men across the river. He went back over the Rhine but very quickly realised that his scheme was "hare-brained". The Germans were throwing everything they could at the river bank and there was clearly no possibility of saving more men. In fact Watkins himself was stranded on the north bank as the last boat pulled away as dawn broke over the Netherlands.**

Watkins was not the only one that sacrificed his freedom to help the wounded. Colonel Graeme Warrack and 250 medical staff, including four surgeons and three other chaplains, also remained behind to care for the injured men.

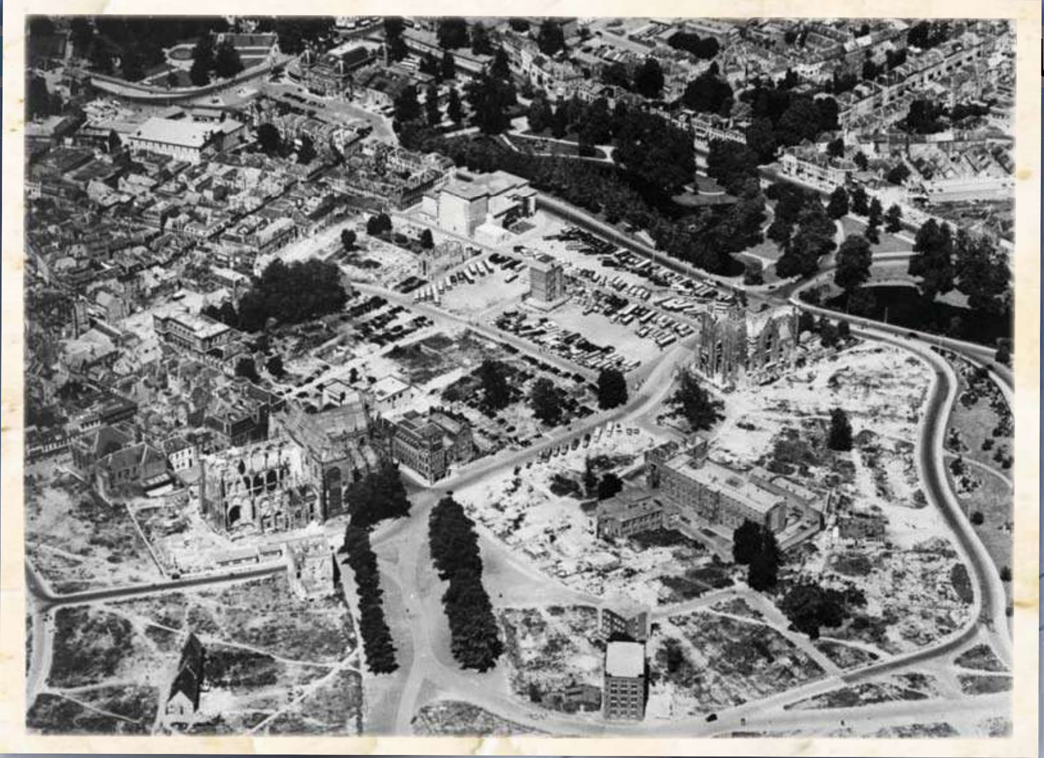
A total of 2,398 men escaped across the river that night. Of these 160 were Poles, seventy-five were Dorsets and the remainder, 2,163, were from the 1st Airborne Division. Some 1,500 were posted as missing.

Many of those that died that night actually drowned whilst trying to swim to the south bank. For a reasonable swimmer the crossing was no great obstacle, but most of those that were lost in this manner made the mistake of attempting it without first removing clothing, arms or equipment. Weighed down by their heavy Army issue boots and thick, water-sodden battledresses, they stood little chance.[1]

One of the Polish troopers who was left stranded on the north bank, Sergeant Szubert, watched as the last boat left: "Everything falls apart. Soldiers start doing everything for themselves. They were jumping in the water, some knew how to swim, others didn't. People were drowning, getting wounded. You could hear the groans and cries of drowning soldiers. I wanted to jump in, but when I saw how miserably they died, I decided that I would rather die with a gun in my hand."

The Germans continued to fire on the troops that had been left behind. After an hour one man hung a white rag on his rifle and stood up. The Germans started moving towards the river from both sides.

Some of the Airborne troops were not prepared to surrender and fired upon the Germans, who fired back. But by mid-morning increasingly more white rags appeared. For many, there seemed little point now in continuing to fight.



ABOVE LEFT: **An aerial view of Arnhem taken as the city was being rebuilt in 1949. The road bridge is just out of view to the bottom left, whilst the badly damaged St. Eusebius Church can be seen left of centre. This building is no longer used for religious services but rather is a tourist attraction, specifically commemorating the Airborne Forces in involved in *Market Garden.*** (COURTESY OF THE RIJKSDIENST VOOR CULTUREEL ERFGOED)

**SURRENDER**

Driver Ron Pearce was with a platoon of the Royal Army Service Corps on the Jagerskamp near the centre of Oosterbeek: "We were part of the brigade defences under Captain Cranmer-Byng. I was in 16 Jagerskamp with three others, and next door in 18 there were about twelve of us. It had been very quiet for some time, and the rest said there was no point in staying so they went back to the Hartenstein. We decided to stay in our house, those were our orders.

"Suddenly there was a load of Germans coming up the street. I shouted to the Lance Corporal who rushed out to tackle them and was shot in the doorway. They surrounded the house and fired a *Panzerfaust* into the house. I was with John Prime, who had learned some German in Italy. Surrounded and with no chance of escape or of doing anything productive we had no choice but to surrender, and so he called out in German. They came to the foot of the stairs and called us down."[2]

Lance Corporal Harry Smith of the South Staffs was with around 150 men stranded on the north bank. A lieutenant led them to a hollow where they would be safe but the general view amongst the group was that if a tank came along they would be in trouble. The officer, therefore, suggested that they should surrender.

"He stood up with a white shirt or something on a stick," Smith explained. "As he did so, a 20-millimetre hit him in the side; it was far too big a wound for a bullet. Then a little chap with a foreign accent spoke to me and said he was worried in case we became prisoners because he had come from Germany before the war. I told him he would be safe in a British uniform and asked him to shout 'Cease fire' in his own tongue, which he did, and the firing stopped. Then a bloody old German with a Kaiser Bill moustache, a big white thing, came over the bank armed with only a rifle and he and another German took us away."[3]

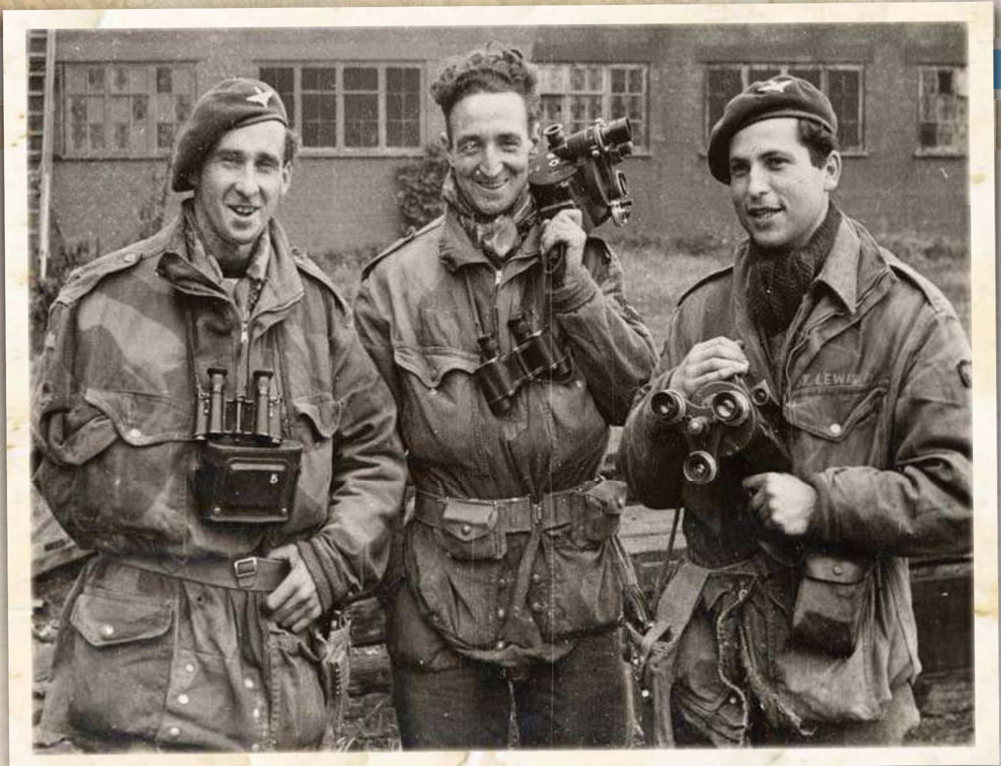
▷▷

# D+9 TUESDAY.26 SEPTEMBER

## THE EPIC OF ARNHEM

MAIN PICTURE and INSET LEFT: **The road bridge across the Lower Rhine at Arnhem of which, on learning the plans for Operation *Market Garden*, Lieutenant General Browning remarked, "we might be going a bridge too far". The original bridge on this spot was destroyed by Dutch Army engineers in 1940 during the German invasion. The repairs were only finally completed in August 1944, barely days before the commencement of the airborne landings. The Arnhem road bridge was officially renamed the "John Frostbrug" on 17 December 1977.** (COURTESY OF THE RIJKSDIENST VOOR CULTUREEL ERFGOED)

Operation *Market Garden* was over. Though a large number of men had been rescued from Oosterbeek, the majority of the 1st Airborne Division had been left behind, most of whom became prisoners of war.

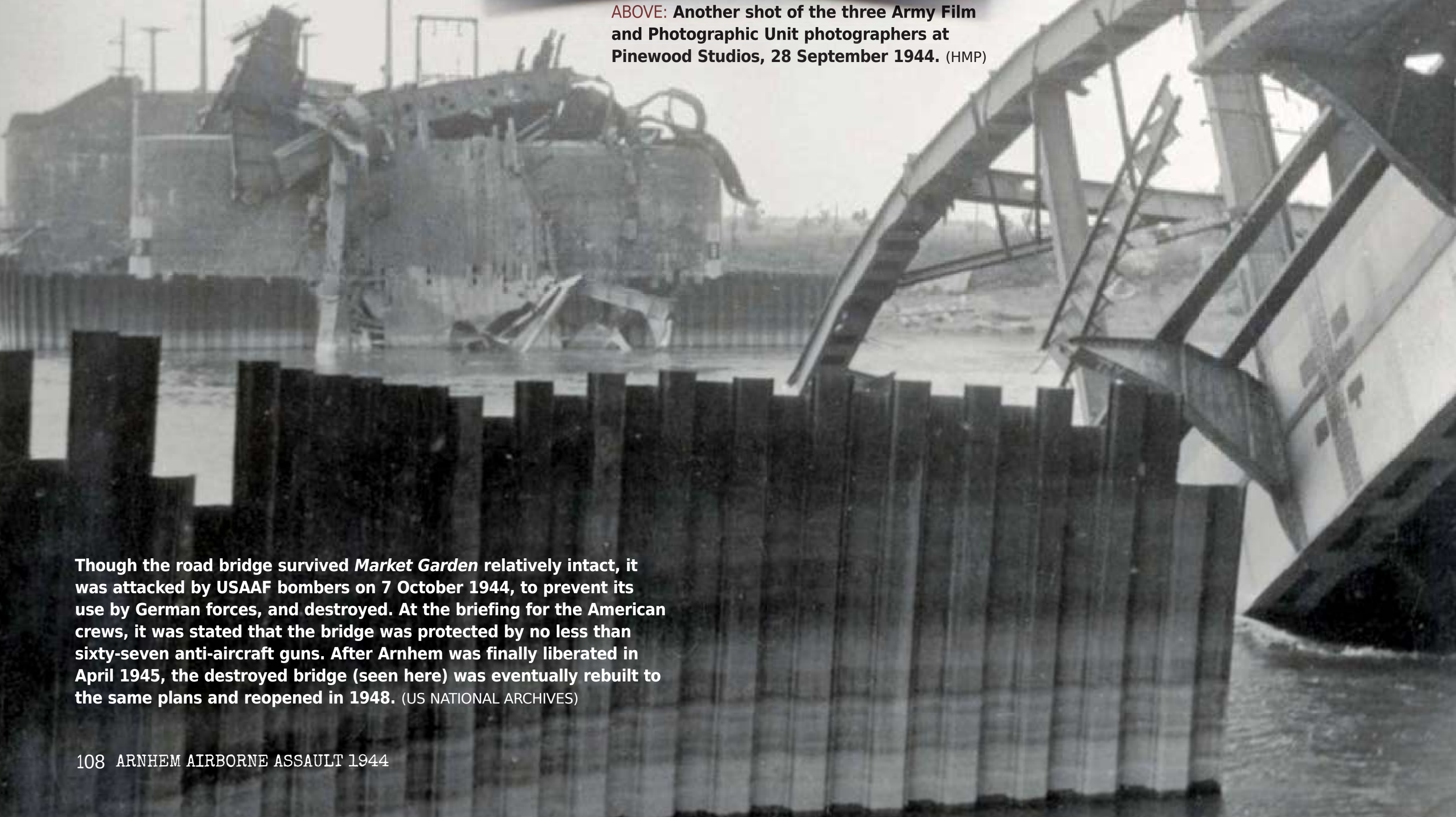


ABOVE: **The three photographers from the Army Film and Photographic Unit who were responsible for many of the official images taken at Arnhem and Oosterbeek during Operation *Market Garden.* This picture, which shows them with their cameras, was taken at Pinewood Studios on the day that they arrived back in the UK – 28 September 1944. Sergeant Smith was wounded in the shoulder. From left to right they are Sergeant Dennis M. Smith (who was wounded in the shoulder), Sergeant Gordon Walker and Sergeant C. Michael Lewis.** (HMP)

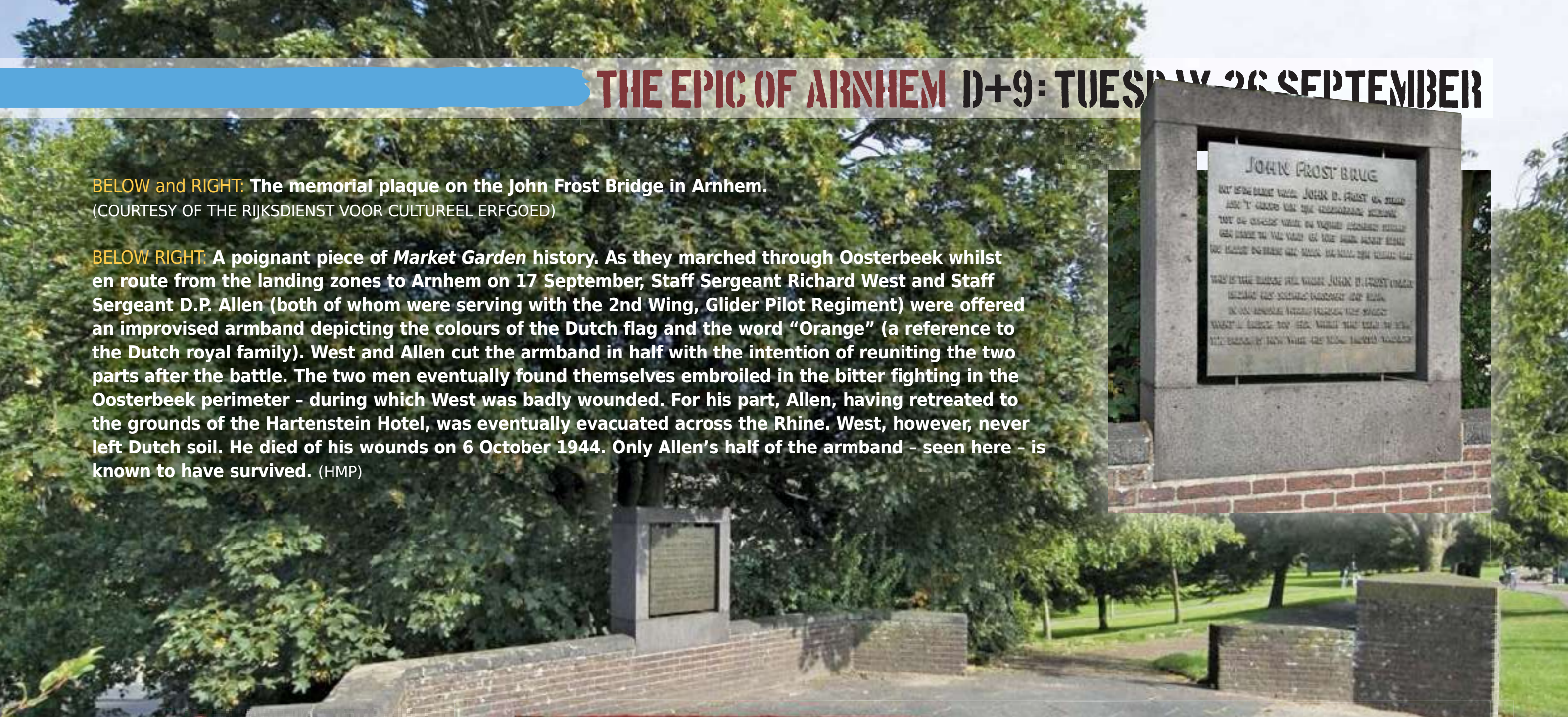
Craftsman Ron Jordon of the Royal Army Ordnance Corps also found himself in German hands. He was with a party that had been edging down to the riverbank and had reached the floodplain by the side of a low building when they came under fire but was caught in a "deafening" blast. "He saw nothing but bright red flashes and lost consciousness," wrote Mike Rossiter in his portrayal of Jordan's experiences in Oosterbeek. "When he came round a machine-gun was blasting away just a few feet from his head, so close that every shot rang in his ears as if he were being hit with a hammer. The sound of two more grenades came from inside the building, and Ron saw the figure of a German soldier crawling towards him. The German grabbed his ankle, and Ron felt a jolt of pain shoot up his leg so excruciating he screamed, then he lost consciousness again.

"He came to once more to find himself being carried in a tarpaulin, with one of his comrades at each corner. His whole body was in agony. Every jolt sent waves of pain through his body and his leg felt as if it were on fire. Another pain in his back stabbed him with extra energy every time he drew breath. His mouth was full of blood, which was dripping down his chin. Still stunned by the explosion, he felt no fear, but knew that his life was probably ending. He neither knew nor cared where his mates were carrying him and it crossed his mind that they might have thought he was already dead. The situation became clearer when he was lowered painfully to the ground. He and his mates were being guarded by two German soldiers, sub-machine guns at the ready. They had been taken prisoner."[4]

ABOVE: **Another shot of the three Army Film and Photographic Unit photographers at Pinewood Studios, 28 September 1944.** (HMP)

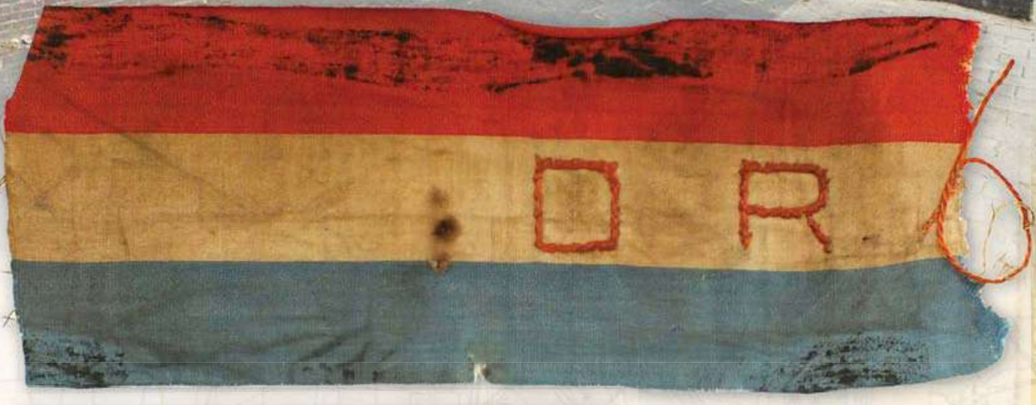


**Though the road bridge survived *Market Garden* relatively intact, it was attacked by USAAF bombers on 7 October 1944, to prevent its use by German forces, and destroyed. At the briefing for the American crews, it was stated that the bridge was protected by no less than sixty-seven anti-aircraft guns. After Arnhem was finally liberated in April 1945, the destroyed bridge (seen here) was eventually rebuilt to the same plans and reopened in 1948.** (US NATIONAL ARCHIVES)



BELOW and RIGHT: **The memorial plaque on the John Frost Bridge in Arnhem.** (COURTESY OF THE RIJKSDIENST VOOR CULTUREEL ERFGOED)

BELOW RIGHT: **A poignant piece of *Market Garden* history. As they marched through Oosterbeek whilst en route from the landing zones to Arnhem on 17 September, Staff Sergeant Richard West and Staff Sergeant D.P. Allen (both of whom were serving with the 2nd Wing, Glider Pilot Regiment) were offered an improvised armband depicting the colours of the Dutch flag and the word "Orange" (a reference to the Dutch royal family). West and Allen cut the armband in half with the intention of reuniting the two parts after the battle. The two men eventually found themselves embroiled in the bitter fighting in the Oosterbeek perimeter - during which West was badly wounded. For his part, Allen, having retreated to the grounds of the Hartenstein Hotel, was eventually evacuated across the Rhine. West, however, never left Dutch soil. He died of his wounds on 6 October 1944. Only Allen's half of the armband - seen here - is known to have survived.** (HMP)



## EVASION

Private H. Boardman of the 156th Parachute Battalion had earlier become cut off from the main force in the woods to the north-west of Oosterbeek with a number of other men. By 25 September they had been without food for seven days and did not have a single round of ammunition between them. Ordered to split up and save themselves, Boardman and three others managed to find a barn where, in the afternoon, a padre and a man from the Red Cross found them. The Red Cross man said that he would put them in touch with the local Resistance movement and then took them to a place where they could hide out for the night. It was there that they heard XXX Corps' bombardment covering the escape of the Airborne Division. They then knew that they were trapped on the north bank.

On the morning of the 26th the Red Cross man and a Red Cross nurse brought the men razors and civilian clothes and shoes and food. That afternoon the Red Cross pair returned with a horse and cart. The airborne troopers were told to lie in the bottom of the cart, laying head to toe. Then bedding and furniture was piled on top of them.

They set off for Ede to the north-west of Arnhem. As they were trundling along a German cycle patrol rode along side and one of the Germans even put his hand on the side of the cart and actually held onto Boardman's leg without the German being aware of what he was holding on to. Just outside Ede they were stopped at a German checkpoint but, thanks to the nurse, no search was made of the cart.

Eventually they reached Ede and were taken into a school. They were placed on stretchers and told to say nothing to anyone. Should someone enquire about them, the nurse would explain that they were deaf and dumb and were inmates from the mental hospital at Wolfheze. What happened to Private Boardman's group and a number of others will be told later.[5]

ABOVE: **On 27 September 1944, whilst flying this Spitfire IX of 441 Squadron RCAF, Pilot Officer Sid Bregman shot down a Messerschmitt Bf 109 near Arnhem.** (COURTESY OF S. BREGMAN)

RIGHT: **The Airborne Commemorative Marker that can be seen in front of the old St. Elisabeth Hospital - the building itself was converted into apartments in 2000.** (HMP)

## ESCAPE

Major Anthony Deane-Drummond, it may be recalled, had been captured by the Germans after the collapse of the 2nd Battalion at the Arnhem road bridge on the 22nd. He had no intention of remaining in captivity and he knew that his best chance of escape was before he and the rest of the prisoners were transferred to Germany.

In the large house on the outskirts of Arnhem where the prisoners were being kept Deane-Drummond discovered that there was a cupboard with a flush-fitting concealed door. It had been wall-papered over and had evidently not been spotted by the Germans. The cupboard was approximately four feet across and

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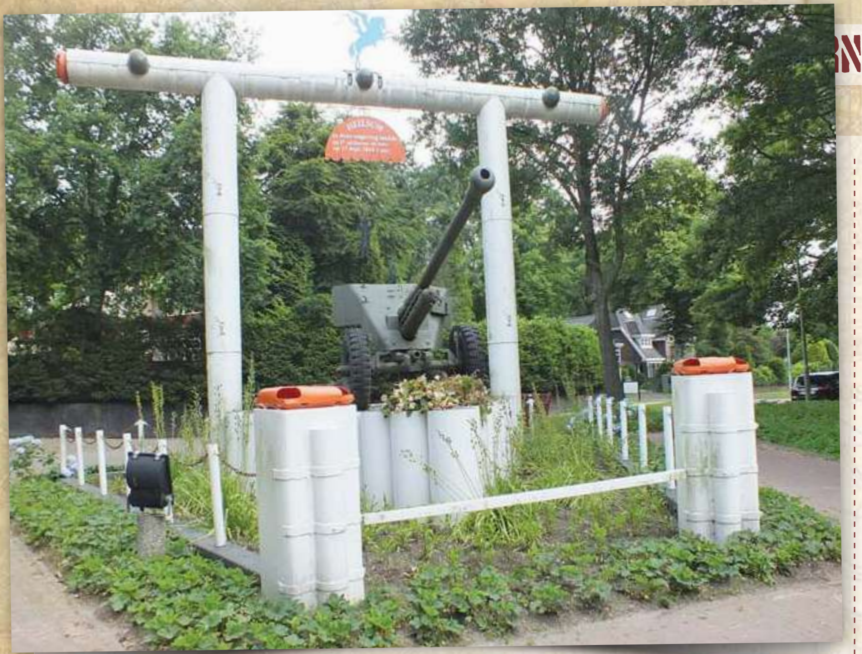
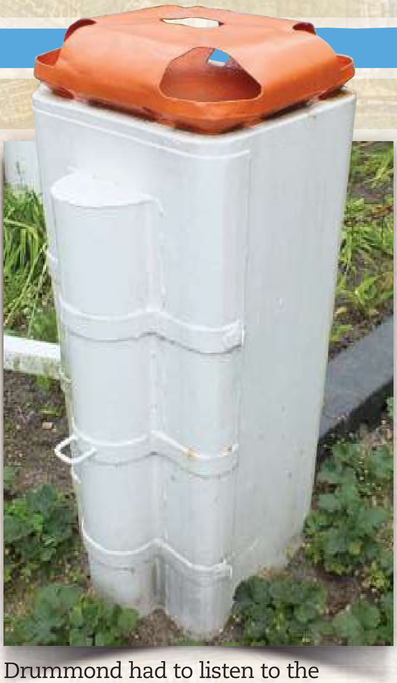




LEFT: **The Heelsum Airborne Memorial which can be seen off the Bennekomseweg in Heelsum, which in turn is located to the west of Oosterbeek. The structure was erected by local residents in 1945 using many pieces of discarded equipment from the battlefield, including items such as helmets, shell cases and parachute supply canisters. Originally located a short distance away, the memorial was moved to this location during the construction of the A50 motorway.** (HMP)

TOP RIGHT: **This surviving parachute canister is an example of the F-Type containers which were designed to carry special equipment such as radios.** (HMP)

about seven feet high but only twelve inches deep. There were shelves in the cupboard but, when these were taken out, Deane-Drummond found he could stand in there in what he regarded as "tolerable comfort".

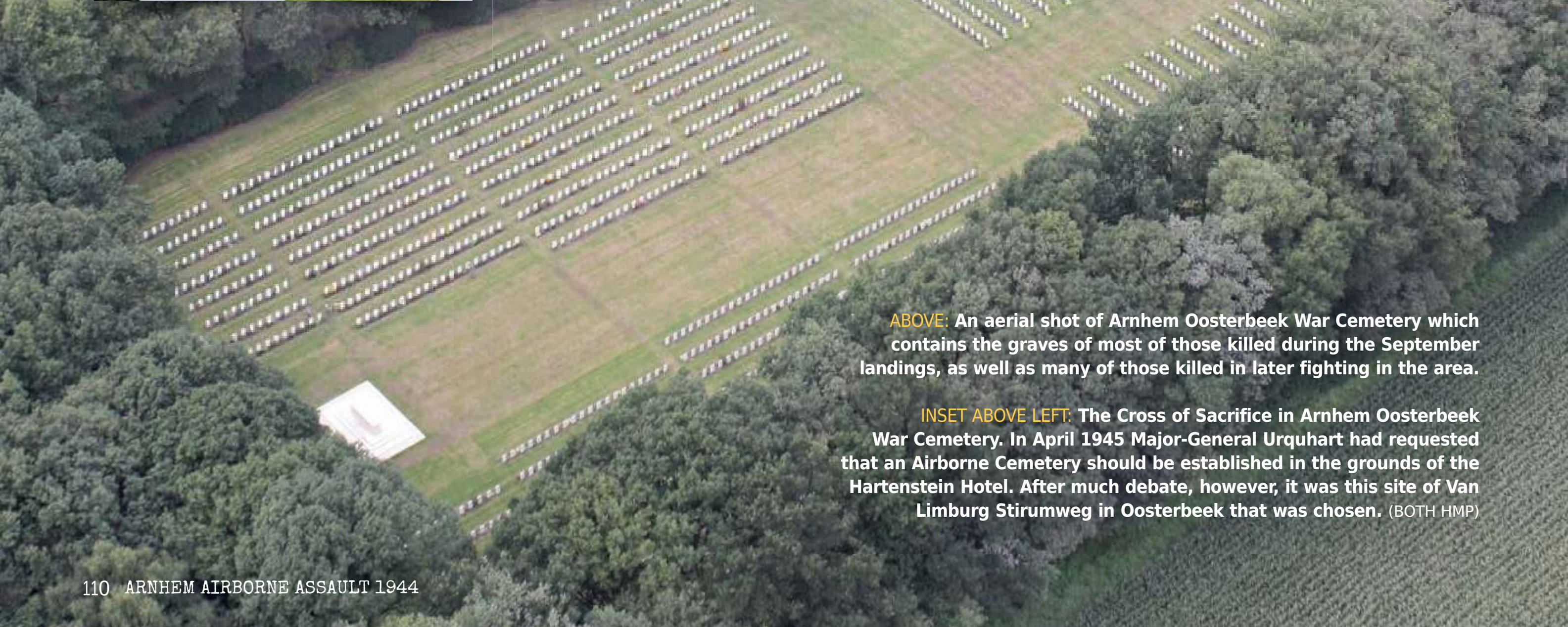
He stocked his little hideaway up with what food and water he could gather. All he had was his water bottle and an old two-pound jam jar, both of which he filled up and, for food he had a one-pound tin of lard and half a small loaf of bread. With that meagre ration he hid himself away in the little room and waited for the Germans to move out.

"I stood first on one leg then on the other; then I leaned on one shoulder and then on the other," Deane-Drummond later wrote in his memoirs. "There was no room to sit down because the cupboard was too shallow. I managed to sleep all right although occasionally my knees would give way and drop forward against the door making a hammer-like noise. Every bone in my body ached, and I felt quite light-headed from lack of food, water and rest."

The day after he had secreted himself behind the concealed door, the Germans turned the room the cupboard was in into an interrogation centre. For four or five days Deane-Drummond had to listen to the prisoners being questioned. Most only gave their name, rank and number, but one officer was so forthcoming with information that he almost burst out of his cupboard to shut the man up!

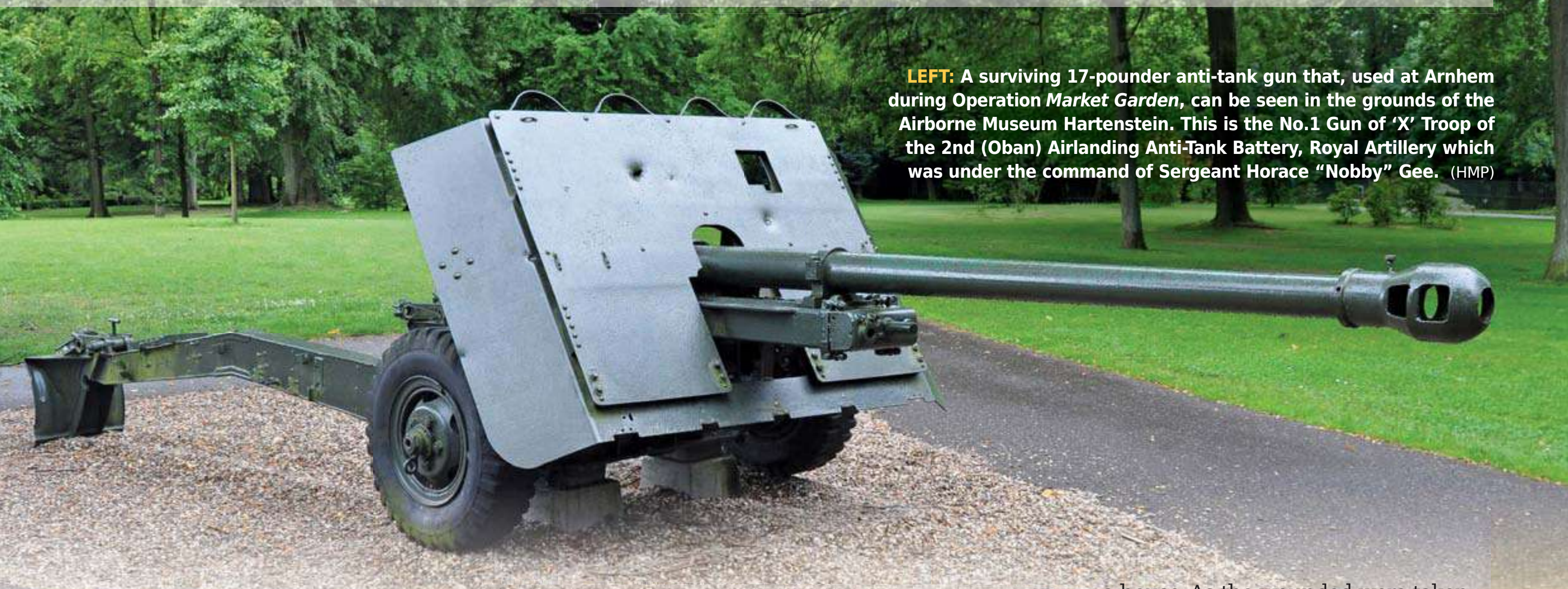
Little by little he eked out his rations of water and bread. Four mouthfuls of water every four or five hours and just a bite or two of bread was all he permitted himself. Water was his greatest problem and after nine or ten days his mouth was so dry he could no longer digest any of the bread.

By the thirteenth day he could stand it no more and decided to make his escape that night or fail in the attempt. He waited until the Germans had left the room for the night and then cautiously opened the door of the cupboard. "My plan," he wrote, "was to get the window open and then



ABOVE: **An aerial shot of Arnhem Oosterbeek War Cemetery which contains the graves of most of those killed during the September landings, as well as many of those killed in later fighting in the area.**

INSET ABOVE LEFT: **The Cross of Sacrifice in Arnhem Oosterbeek War Cemetery. In April 1945 Major-General Urquhart had requested that an Airborne Cemetery should be established in the grounds of the Hartenstein Hotel. After much debate, however, it was this site of Van Limburg Stirumweg in Oosterbeek that was chosen.** (BOTH HMP)



**LEFT:** A surviving 17-pounder anti-tank gun that, used at Arnhem during Operation *Market Garden*, can be seen in the grounds of the Airborne Museum Hartenstein. This is the No.1 Gun of 'X' Troop of the 2nd (Oban) Airlanding Anti-Tank Battery, Royal Artillery which was under the command of Sergeant Horace "Nobby" Gee. (HMP)

wait for a lorry or tank to go by before slipping out and into the shrubs growing almost under the sill … I was in luck and no sooner had I opened the window when a large truck went clattering by. This was my cue, and I was quickly out and had dropped into the shrubbery. My luck held good on the 13th day in that Dutch cupboard."[6]

With the help of the courageous members of the local Resistance group, Deane-Drummond was smuggled to Ede to join the other evaders gathered there.

## "GATEWAY TO THE FATHERLAND"

The Battle of Arnhem was over but further south the fighting continued. The German troops were told that the Nijmegen road bridge was the "gateway to the Fatherland" and that its destruction was essential to avoid defeat. All available land forces were committed to this task. Between 19 September, when the Guards Division reached Nijmegen, and 4 October there were no less than twelve attacks of divisional strength or greater against the Eindhoven-Arnhem salient. These involved the 9th and 16th Panzer Divisions, the 9th and 10th SS Panzer Divisions, as well as infantry from the Fifteenth Army.

Of these, the strongest were delivered north-east from the Reichswald forest, on 28 September and south from Arnhem on 1 October. Both were directed at the Nijmegen road bridge. Both were repulsed but with heavy losses.

The Germans also mounted repeated air attacks upon the bridge, the most serious being on 27 September when almost six hundred aircraft appeared over Nijmegen. These attacks also failed.

The enemy then resorted to other methods, and these proved more successful. On the night of 28/29 September, specially trained frogmen and swimmers equipped with demolition charges managed to seriously damage the railway bridge and closed the road bridge for forty-eight hours. Preventative measures were immediately put in hand and the Nijmegen bridges were never seriously threatened again.

ABOVE: **This modified and restored 6-pounder gun forms part of the Heelsum Airborne Memorial.** (HMP)

## AFTER THE BATTLE

With the end of the fighting, the Germans rounded up 6,450 men, including the wounded. Lieutenant Peter Baille was amongst those waiting in an aid post in the cellar of a house. As the wounded were taken out by the Germans he saw a scene in the street which haunted him long afterwards: "There were dead bodies by the *dozens*, lying about and stinking – not just lifeless corpses that you must expect to see on the battlefield, but bits of bodies. Bodies without heads, arms or legs. Bodies burnt, riddled with bullets. Smashed up jeeps and houses and everything smashed to smithereens. The stench of the rotting bodies filled the air. The sudden shock of seeing all this and I suppose the condition I was in, I'm not ashamed to confess that I just knelt down and cried."[7]

Another who was shocked with what he saw in Oosterbeek was *Oberstleutnant* Fritz Fullriede who witnessed a "scene of devastation" which he recorded in his diary

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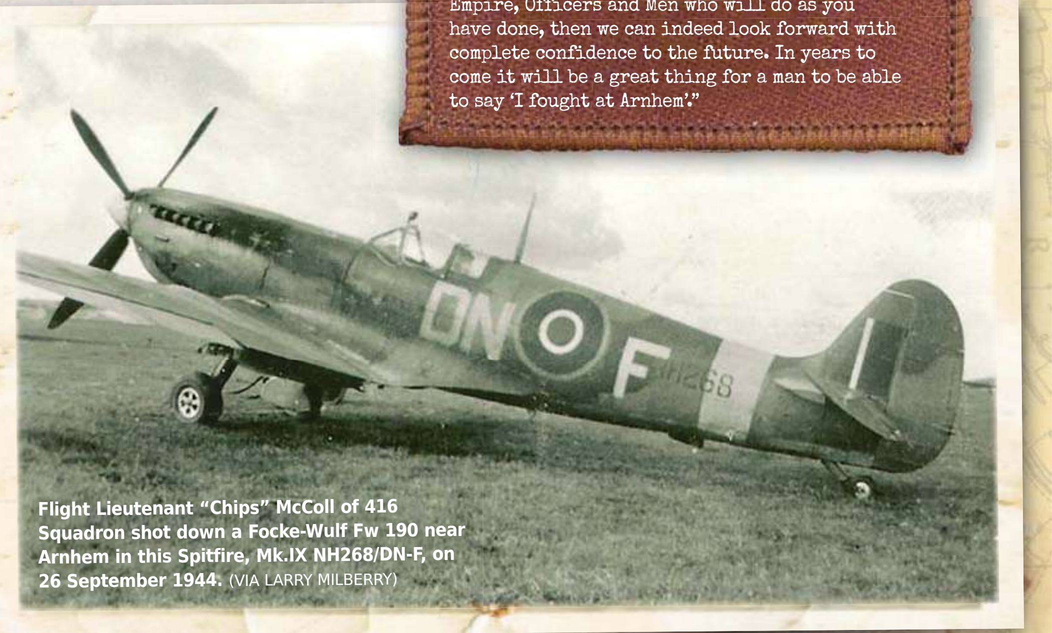
### THE EPIC OF ARNHEM

IN A letter to Urquhart, Montgomery wrote: "In the annals of the British Army there are many glorious deeds … But there can be few episodes more glorious than the epic of Arnhem and those who follow will find it hard to live up to the standards you have set.

"So long as we have in our Armies of the British Empire, Officers and Men who will do as you have done, then we can indeed look forward with complete confidence to the future. In years to come it will be a great thing for a man to be able to say 'I fought at Arnhem'."



**Flight Lieutenant "Chips" McColl of 416 Squadron shot down a Focke-Wulf Fw 190 near Arnhem in this Spitfire, Mk.IX NH268/DN-F, on 26 September 1944.** (VIA LARRY MILBERRY) for 26 September: "All around lie dead Germans and Englishmen. The trees are fully decorated with hanging parachutes, with which the English had attempted to resupply their cut off troops. Two of our Panthers are also lying there, with their burnt crews inside them."[8]

ABOVE: **A second 17-pounder anti-tank gun that is on display in the grounds of the Airborne Museum Hartenstein. This is the No.3 Gun of 'D' Troop, 1st Airlanding Anti-Tank Battery RA, which was commanded by Sergeant George Thomas. This gun played a vital part in the defence of the Oosterbeek perimeter until it was knocked out on the 22nd, when Sergeant Thomas and Bombardier John McCullock were both killed.** (HMP)

ABOVE: **Some of the damage to Sergeant Thomas' 17-pounder.** (HMP)

In Oosterbeek 688 buildings were demolished, 1,567 heavily damaged, 2,157 lightly damaged with another 772 having broken windows. "The destruction was unimaginable. Everywhere in the villages there were heaps of dust: rubble, furniture and mattresses. The whole war zone was strewn with large amounts of unused ammunition, arms and mines. Gas, water and electricity did not operate anymore. Wells, ponds and springs were contaminated as the result of dead bodies floating in rivers and canals."[9]

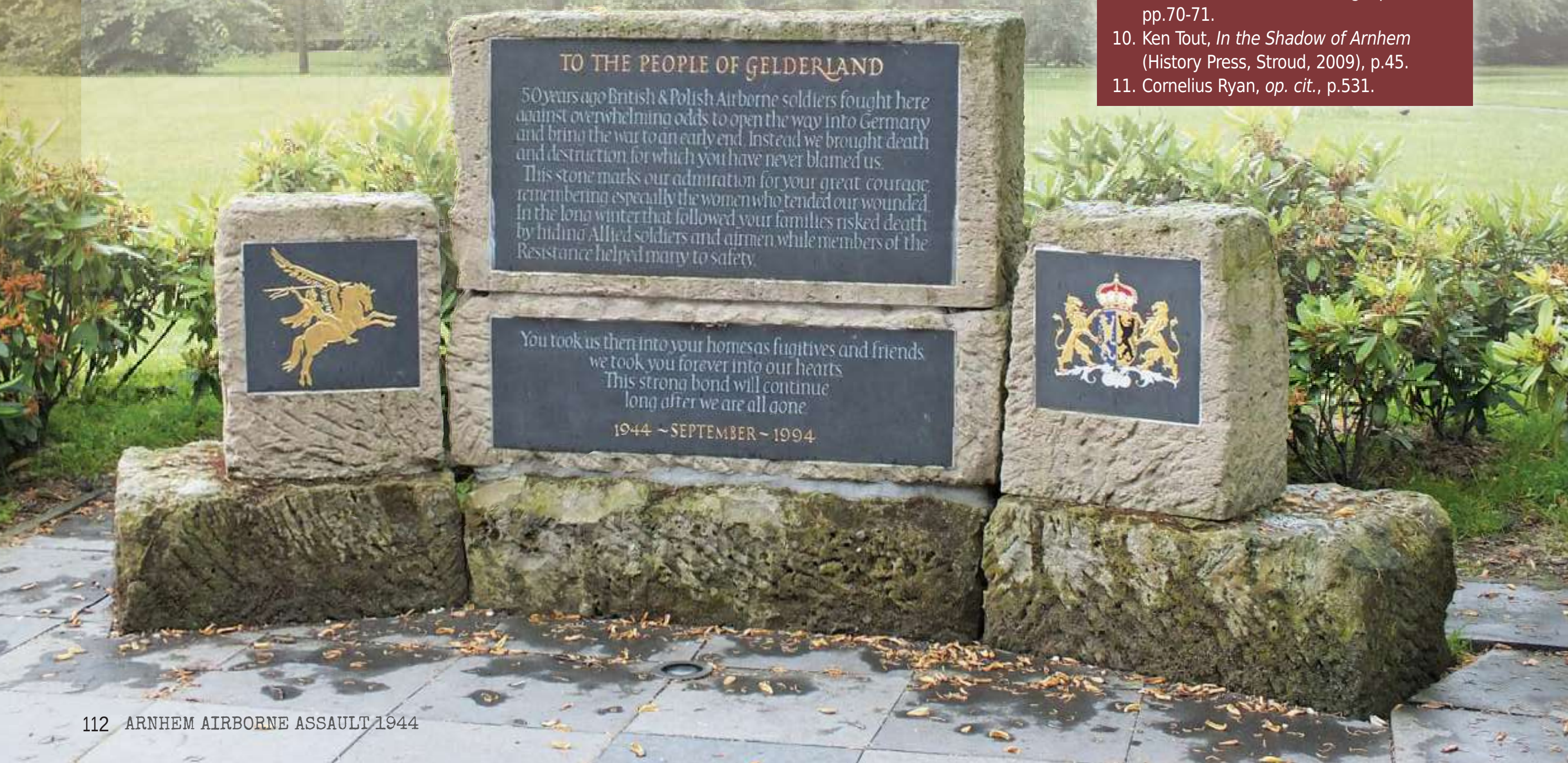
### NIJMEGEN

The men who had tried to drive up the road to Arnhem now faced the depressing scene of vehicles coming past them down the road from Arnhem. Corporal Reg Spittles of the 1st Royal Tank Regiment watched them go by "packed with men from Arnhem, all looking like zombies, as if they were in a coma. I have to admit to shedding a tear. I suppose we should have shown some sign of pride in them, but they drove in total silence. And we had so much pride that only silence could show it."[10]

After the small numbers of men that had crossed the river in the previous attempts to reinforce the airborne troops at Oosterbeek no-one expected so many men to escape. As a result there was not enough transport for all of them and, after all they had endured, some had to march back towards Nijmegen.

Amongst those returning to Nijmegen was Roy Urquhart. Browning did go up to the Rhine to welcome back the survivors but had sent a Jeep up to Driel to collect Urquhart. When the 1st Airborne Division's commander reached the big house on the outskirts of Nijmegen where Browning had set up his headquarters, Browning's aide suggested that Urquhart should change out of his torn and bedraggled uniform. Urquhart declined the offer. "I wanted Browning to see us as we were – as we had been," he explained.

Incredibly, Urquhart was kept waiting whilst Browning dressed himself to look immaculate. When he eventually walked in he looked as if "he had just come off parade, rather than from his bed in the middle of a battle."[11] All that was magnificent and all that was inept in Operation *Market Garden* were portrayed in that simple scene.


TO THE PEOPLE OF GELDERLAND
50 years ago British & Polish Airborne soldiers fought here against overwhelming odds to open the way into Germany and bring the war to an early end. Instead we brought death and destruction for which you have never blamed us.
This stone marks our admiration for your great courage remembering especially the women who tended our wounded. In the long winter that followed your families risked death by hiding Allied soldiers and airmen while members of the Resistance helped many to safety.
You took us then into your homes as fugitives and friends we took you forever into our hearts This strong bond will continue long after we are all gone
1944 ~ SEPTEMBER ~ 1994

BELOW: **The memorial to the people of Gelderland that stands in the grounds of the Airborne Museum Hartenstein near its main entrance. The inscription details the special relationship that was formed between the veterans of *Market Garden* and the local population.** (HMP)

NOTES

1. John Fairley, *op. cit.*, p.195.
2. Frank Steer, *Arnhem, op. cit.*, pp.141-2.
3. Mike Rossiter, *op. cit.*, pp.367-75.
4. Martin Middlebrook, *op. cit.*, pp.433-4.
5. Peter-Alexander van Teesling, *op. cit.*, pp.63-6.
6. Anthony Deane-Drummond, *Return Ticket* (Collins, London, 1967), pp.135-43.
7. Richard Aldrich, *op. cit.*, p.564.
8. Robert Kershaw, *op. cit.*, p.377.
9. Peter-Alexander van Teesling, *op. cit.*, pp.70-71.
10. Ken Tout, *In the Shadow of Arnhem* (History Press, Stroud, 2009), p.45.
11. Cornelius Ryan, *op. cit.*, p.531.

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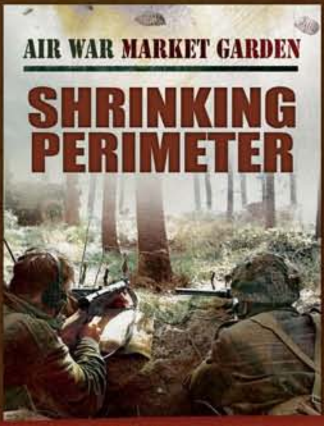
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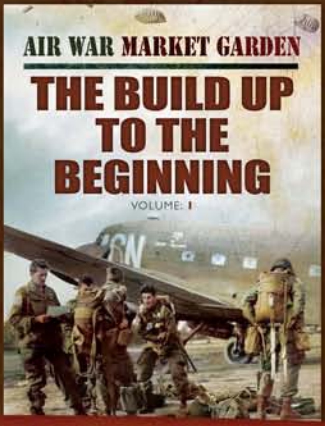
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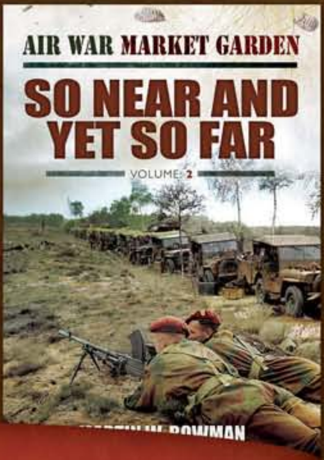
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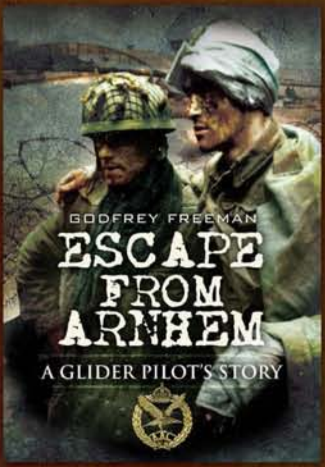
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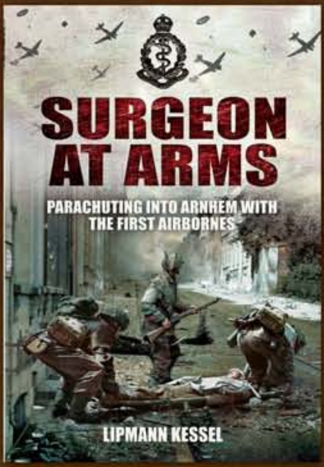
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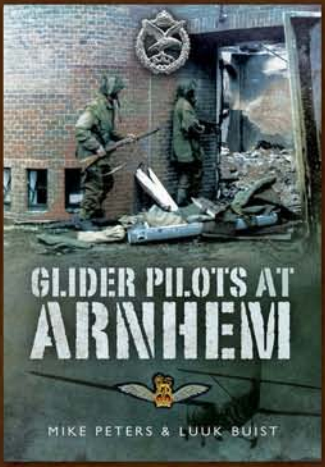
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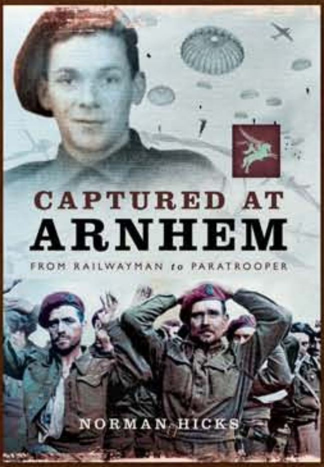
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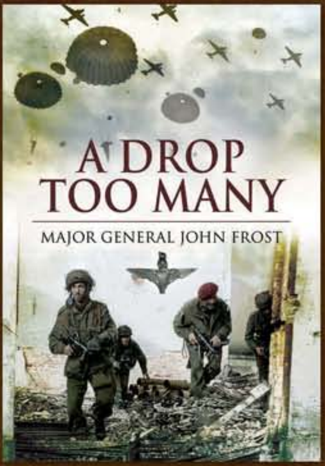
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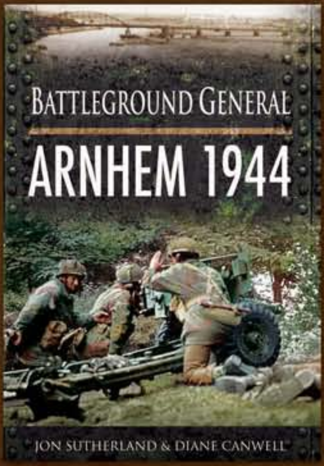
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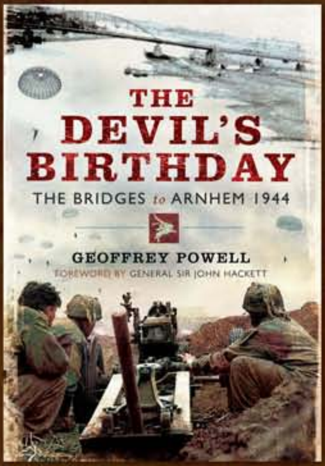
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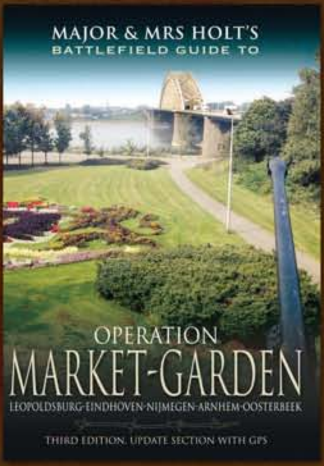
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# OPERATION PEGASUS

## ESCAPE ACROSS THE RHINE

**More than 6,000 men of the original 10,000 men of the 1st Airborne Division were taken prisoner. However, some of the missing men had avoided capture and were hiding in the woods on the German-occupied side of Lower Rhine. Under the very noses of the enemy one of the greatest mass-escape operations of the Second World War began to unfold thanks to the efforts of the local Dutch Resistance.**

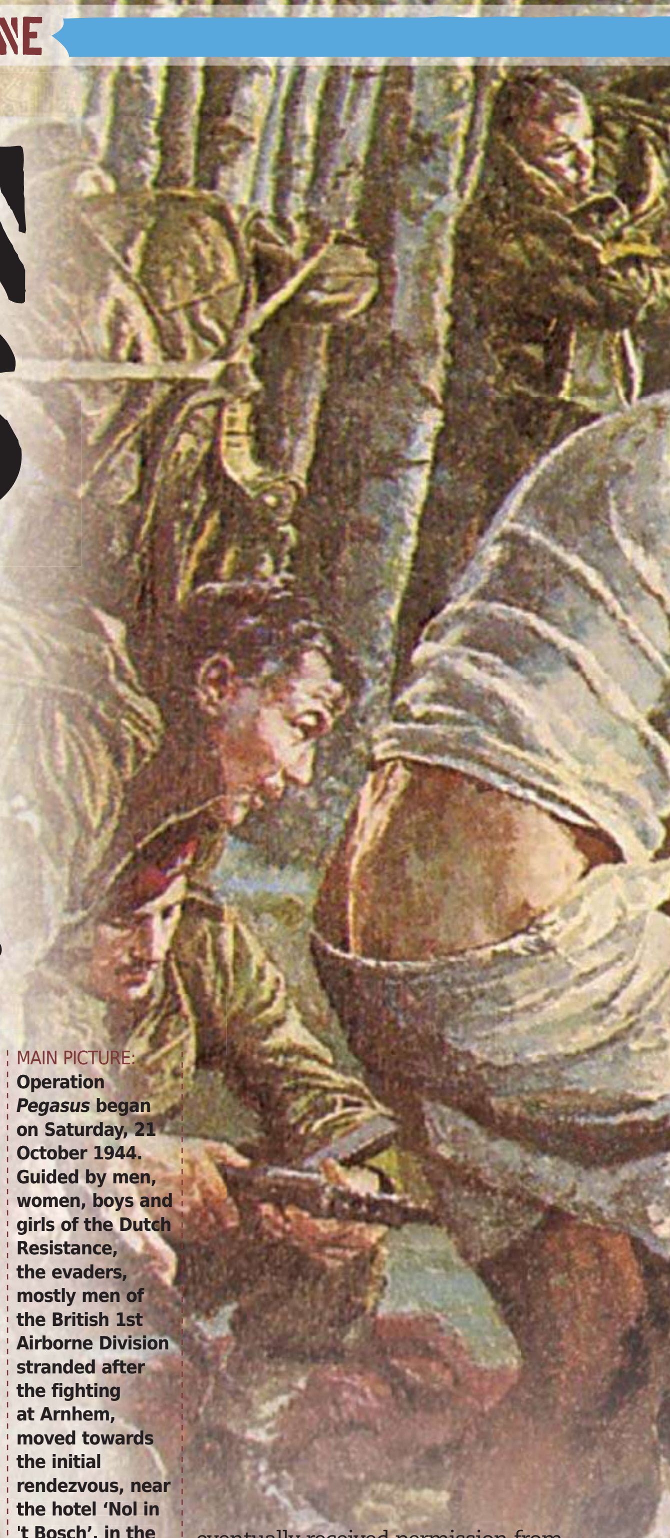
**REPORTS THAT large numbers of British soldiers had evaded capture and were in hiding on the German-held territory to the north of the Lower Rhine in the area around Arnhem reached the ears of the chief organiser of MI9,[1] Major Airey Neave DSO OBE MC, shortly after the failure of Operation *Market Garden*. Neave, whose code-name was *Saturday*, had fostered a network of local secret agents in Holland and through them he was able to learn just how many British troops were at large in the occupied territory – it was hundreds!**

Details of the names and numbers of troops in hiding were passed onto Neave in the most unlikely way. Nijmegen's electricity power plant, which was in Allied hands, had a direct telephone link to a transformer station in Ede, some twenty miles away across the Lower Rhine in German-held territory. The phone was in working order and was being used by the Dutch Resistance.

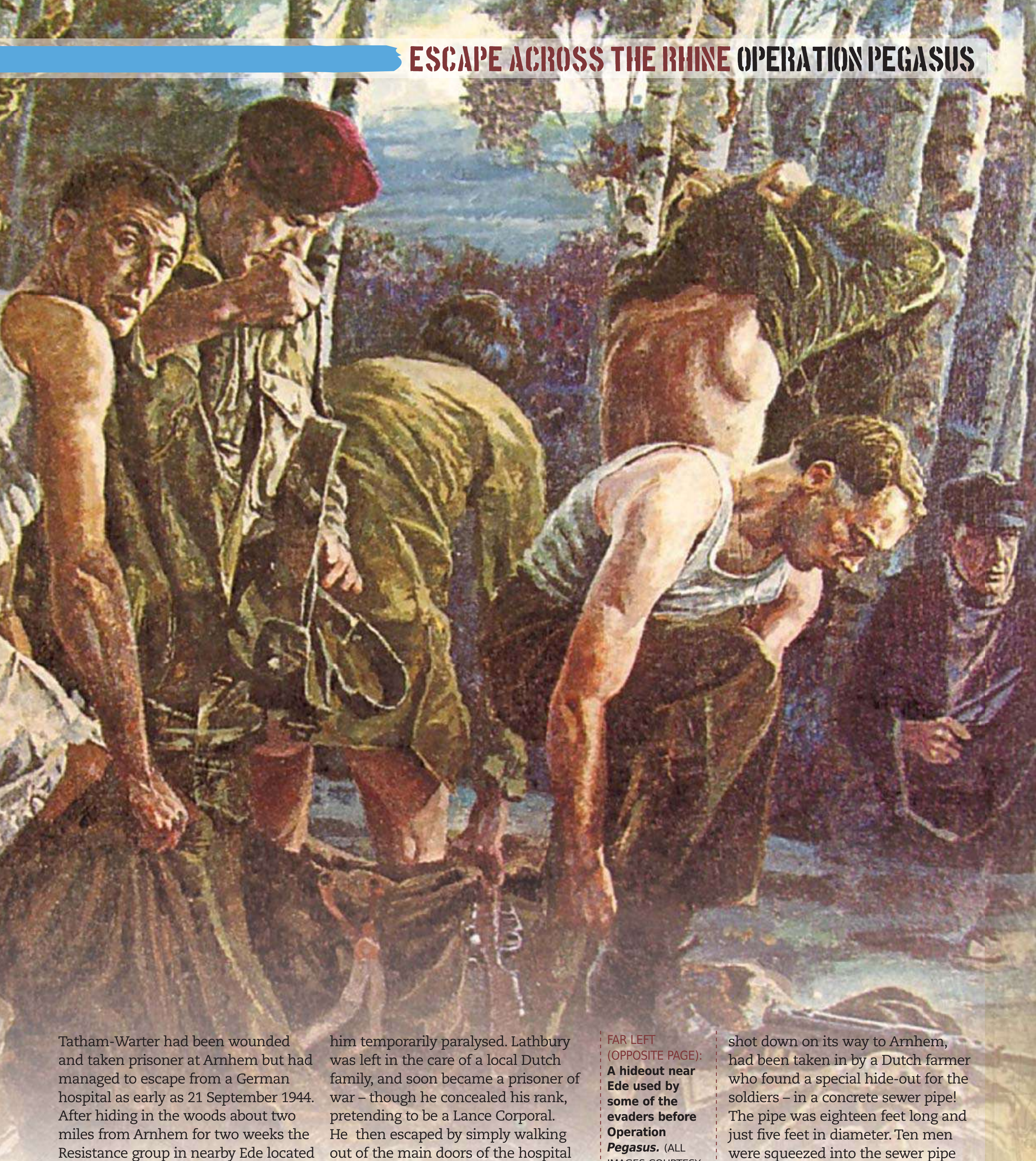
Neave proposed to use the telephone to make contact with the stranded Airborne troops. Though his superiors were "horror-struck" at the idea of telephoning across enemy lines, he eventually received permission from HQ 21st Army Group. The phone line was quite secure and he was assured by the power station engineers that the Germans could not tap it.

"At first", explained Neave, "it was simply a question of waiting each night for the telephone to ring, and hearing a British officer's voice reading a list of names. In this way, reports of casualties and the names of those who were still in hiding were reported back to their families."[2]

Obtaining the information that was relayed to Airey Neave, however, was far from simple. It was gathered by the "Voice" as Neave called him, who was in fact Major Digby Tatham-Warter of 'A' Company, 2nd Parachute Battalion.



MAIN PICTURE: **Operation *Pegasus* began on Saturday, 21 October 1944. Guided by men, women, boys and girls of the Dutch Resistance, the evaders, mostly men of the British 1st Airborne Division stranded after the fighting at Arnhem, moved towards the initial rendezvous, near the hotel 'Nol in 't Bosch', in the woods north-west of the Dutch village Renkum. This painting by Brian Sanders depicts some of the evaders at the rendezvous (Location 1 on the map on page 116) changing from their civilian clothes into assorted military uniforms.** (COURTESY OF BRIAN SANDERS, VIA THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS OF THE AIRBORNE MUSEUM OOSTERBEEK, HOLLAND)



FAR LEFT (OPPOSITE PAGE): **A hideout near Ede used by some of the evaders before Operation *Pegasus.*** (ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS OF THE AIRBORNE MUSEUM OOSTERBEEK, HOLLAND UNLESS STATED OTHERWISE)

Tatham-Warter had been wounded and taken prisoner at Arnhem but had managed to escape from a German hospital as early as 21 September 1944. After hiding in the woods about two miles from Arnhem for two weeks the Resistance group in nearby Ede located him. With the help of this Dutch group, led by "Big Bill" Wildeboer, Tatham-Warter was able to locate many of the other men who were in hiding. In early October he was joined by Brigadier Gerald Lathbury, and soon a "Brigade HQ in hiding" was established.

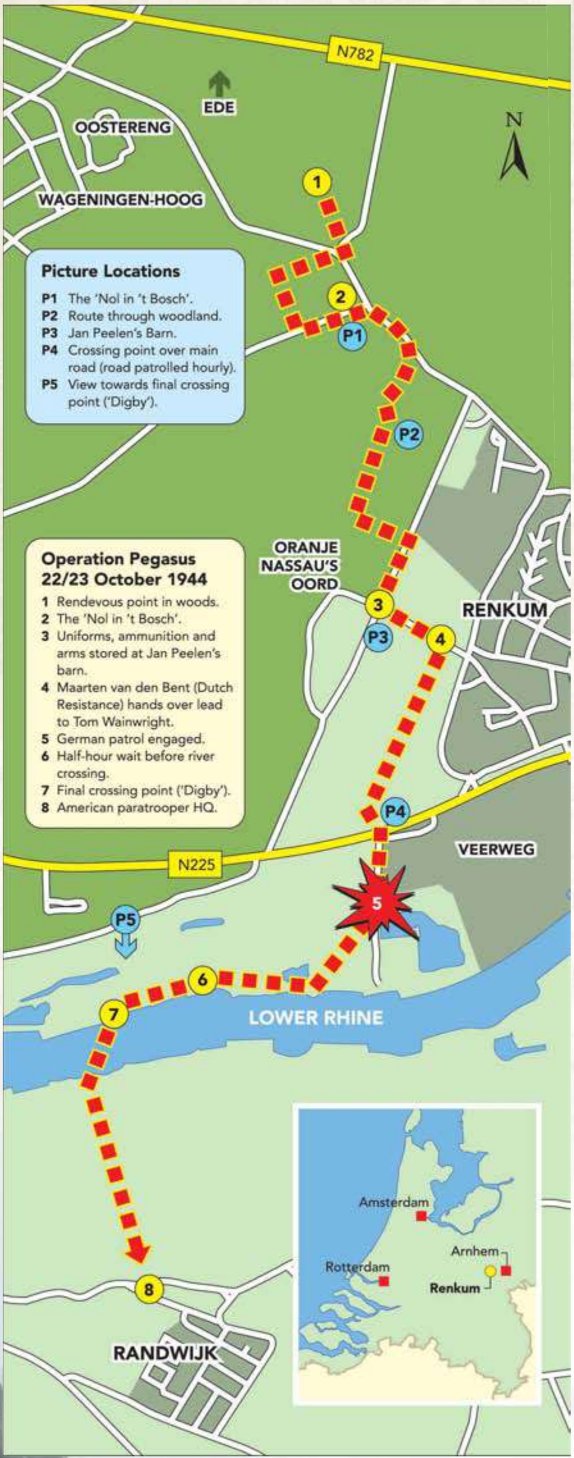
## THE WANDERING MAJOR

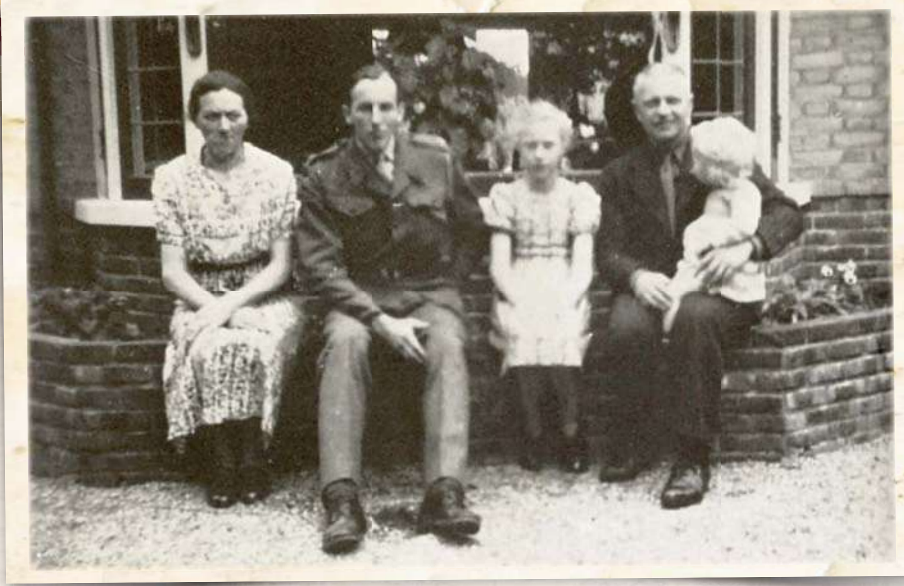
Lathbury had been wounded on 18 September in the left leg and his spine was chipped, a wound which left him temporarily paralysed. Lathbury was left in the care of a local Dutch family, and soon became a prisoner of war – though he concealed his rank, pretending to be a Lance Corporal. He then escaped by simply walking out of the main doors of the hospital in which he was held. Eventually, the Dutch resistance put him in touch with other hiding British soldiers – men such as Tatham-Warter.

Each day, Tatham-Warter would leave his wood-pile hideout, put on a white mackintosh and dark glasses and cycle round to the various safe houses, barns, chicken coops, sheep-pens and underground shelters where his fellow evaders were holed-up. In one case an entire section, the survivors of a glider shot down on its way to Arnhem, had been taken in by a Dutch farmer who found a special hide-out for the soldiers – in a concrete sewer pipe! The pipe was eighteen feet long and just five feet in diameter. Ten men were squeezed into the sewer pipe for five days with just a single bucket for their more personal needs.

Tatham-Warter's last trip of the day was to the electricity station to read out the latest names added to his list of Arnhem survivors. His daring journeys earned him the nickname "the wandering major".[3]

As Operation *Market Garden* had been abandoned there was no immediate prospect of the British army coming to their rescue. ▷▷


N782
EDE
OOSTERENG
WAGENINGEN-HOOG
N
Picture Locations
P1 The 'Nol in 't Bosch'.
P2 Route through woodland.
P3 Jan Peelen's Barn.
P4 Crossing point over main road (road patrolled hourly).
P5 View towards final crossing point ('Digby').
Operation Pegasus 22/23 October 1944
1 Rendevous point in woods.
2 The 'Nol in 't Bosch'.
3 Uniforms, ammunition and arms stored at Jan Peelen's barn.
4 Maarten van den Bent (Dutch Resistance) hands over lead to Tom Wainwright.
5 German patrol engaged.
6 Half-hour wait before river crossing.
7 Final crossing point ('Digby').
8 American paratrooper HQ.
ORANJE NASSAU'S OORD
RENKUM
VEERWEG
N225
LOWER RHINE
RANDWIJK
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
P1
P2
P3
P4
P5
Amsterdam
Rotterdam
Arnhem
Renkum



ABOVE: **Major Digby Tatham-Warter with the family of "Bill" Wildeboer at their home in Ede, October 1944. It was on 3 October 1944, that Tatham-Warter received a visit from Wildeboer, who was the head of the Resistance in Ede. The next day, dressed in civilian clothes, both men covered the ten miles to Ede on bicycles and Tatham-Warter took up residence in the Wildeboer family home, making it his headquarters.**

Somehow Neave would have to get them back across the Rhine before they were discovered.

By 19 October 1944, Captain Tom Wainwright,[4] of Support Company, 156th Parachute Battalion, and Colour Sergeant-Major Robert Grainger, 'D' Company, 10th Battalion Parachute Regiment, had, at the request of Tatham-Warter, undertaken a reconnaissance of the river bank near Wageningen en de Grebbenberg, east of Ede, and concluded there was no chance of crossing the Rhine there because of strong German defences: machine-guns every 100 metres and patrols each half hour. A subsequent suggestion by the Dutch Resistance to cross the river at Renkum, directly south of Ede, was accepted.

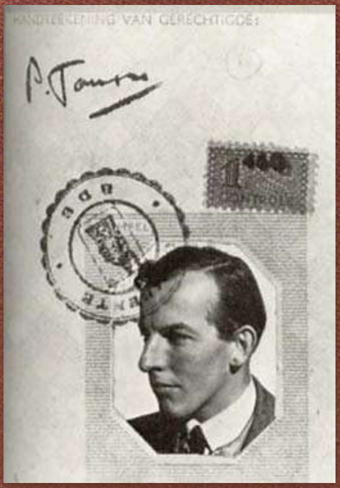
## OPERATION PEGASUS

Even though the river was heavily guarded, a company of Royal Canadian Engineers stationed at Nijmegen had repeatedly crossed and re-crossed the Rhine in assault boats during the evacuation of 25/26 September. The Engineers still had their boats. Neave was going to get the stranded men back. The mission was to be called Operation *Pegasus*.

Much had to be done if what Neave described as "the boldest of all the rescue operations" stood any chance of success. Whilst Neave had the boats and crewmen that he needed, he also wanted soldiers to go across to provide back up and covering fire for the escapers if they were spotted by the Germans. The task of finding these men and organising the rescue flotilla was handed to the commanding officer of the US 101st Airborne Division, Lieutenant Colonel Robert Strayer. When Strayer asked for thirty volunteers, every man of his command stepped forward!

Many of the evaders were wounded and they were widely spread across the enemy-held territory. Assembling and transporting these men would be extremely hazardous, let alone carrying them across the Rhine. The river front was covered by a series of posts all sited 300 yards back on the winter dyke, and the bank itself was known to be regularly patrolled. Precise details of the German defences and troop dispositions

ABOVE: **Members of 133 Parachute Field Ambulance RAMC evading capture. These men became cut off from the remainder of the 1st Airborne Division having dropped too far north of their DZ. A number of this unit hid in 'The Barn' prior to Operation *Pegasus*. In the back row, fourth from the left, is former General Practitioner Lieutenant Donald Olliff. The picture was taken surreptitiously by a Corporal who had smuggled along a camera during Operation *Market Garden*.**


HANDTEEKENING VAN GERECHTIGDE:

## FORGED IDENTITY CARD

MAJOR ALLISON Digby Tatham-Warter's forged identity card, prepared by the Dutch Resistance to enable him to move around the Arnhem and Ede areas whilst completing the preparations for Operation Pegasus. During the fighting at Arnhem, Tatham-Warter could often be seen calmly strolling about the Allied defences, having chosen to wear his red beret in place of a helmet and swinging his trademark umbrella as he went, seemingly oblivious to the constant threat of mortar barrages and sniper fire. He later revealed that he carried the umbrella because he could never remember the password, "and it would be quite obvious to anyone that the bloody fool carrying the umbrella could only be an Englishman".

RIGHT: **Brigadier Gerald Lathbury. After the war Lathbury returned to the Airborne Forces and resumed command of his old unit, the 3rd Parachute Brigade, now a part of the 6th Airborne Division. He commanded them for a year in Palestine, and was later awarded a knighthood and promoted to General.**

RIGHT: **Wouter van den Brink was one of the many members of the Dutch Resistance who assisted in Operation *Pegasus II*. A guide for the escapers, he succeeded in crossing the river.**

LEFT: **The transformer station in Ede was the location of the northern end of the direct telephone connected with the power station at Nijmegen. It was by this method that Tatham-Warter was able to contact British Intelligence.**

along the Rhine (there were by then approximately 3,000 German soldiers in the immediate area) were difficult to obtain because the area two kilometres inland from the river was out of bounds to civilians.

### THEN OR NEVER – THE LAST CHANCE

The doubts about the practicality of the operation were eased when a lone paratrooper appeared. Lieutenant Colonel David Dobie had been rowed across the Waal in a small wooden rowing boat by a young Dutchman with just a single oar! Dobie brought with him details of the escapers' plans.

Because of his recent experiences Dobie was put in charge of organizing the rescue operation from the south bank, assisted by Major Hugh Fraser of the SAS who was given responsibility for communicating with the evaders. A suitable point had to be selected for the crossing. This was found near the village of Randwijk, opposite Renkum which was on the German side of the river. At this point the Rhine was around 150-200 yards wide. There a deserted farmhouse stood on low ground close to the river and a few hundred yards further inland was a dyke road behind the cover of which the boats could be moved.

The boats – actually large dinghies – were transported by road and hidden near Randwijk. They were then carried by night to the riverbank and stored in a barn beside the farmhouse.

Fraser continued to communicate with Tatham-Warter but as the day of the operation approached he was informed that the Gestapo had arrived in the district and all Dutch civilians were being evacuated from the areas around the Lower Rhine. This caused great dismay amongst the *Pegasus* planners. But there was no point in postponing the operation as any delay would simply make it even more difficult to smuggle a large number of people down to the river. Also, by the middle of November the river would be too high and fast-flowing for rowing boats to cross it under their own power. It was then or never.

Regardless of any changes in circumstances, it was decided that Operation *Pegasus* would go ahead on Sunday, 22 October 1944 – one day earlier than planned.

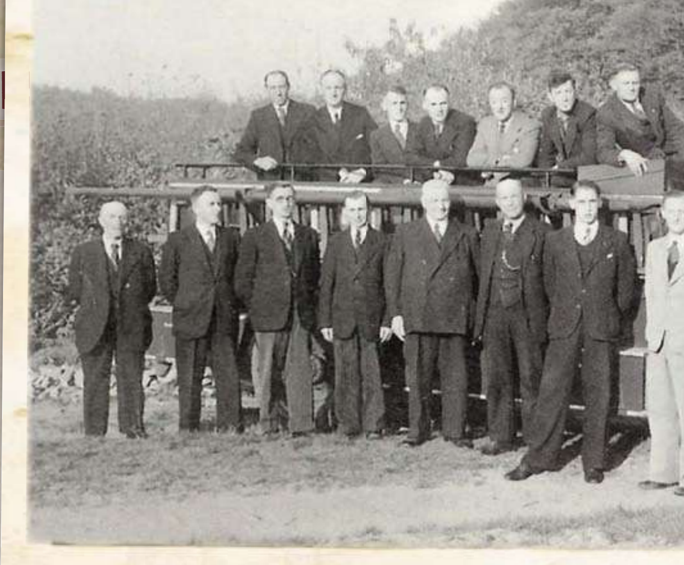
### HIGH STAKES

At enormous personal risk to themselves and their families, as the appointed hour for Operation *Pegasus* approached the Dutch Resistance teams brought the evaders together to a point about three miles from the river. The men were moved by foot and bicycle, often in ones and twos, with their Dutch guides along main roads in broad daylight. From there the whole party would move on foot at nightfall down to the crossing place. "Never", wrote one of the organisers, "had the Resistance mounted such a complex operation in which the stakes were so great for everyone".[5]

The group which Major Anthony Deane-Drummond was part of was picked up by three old, covered lorries. The fifty men were told to lie down on the floor of the vehicles

▷▷

TOP LEFT: **Major Anthony Deane-Drummond made good his escape from the cage he was being held in near Velp on 5 October. He was then able to make contact with the Dutch Resistance.**



TOP: **The fire engine from Ede that was used by members of the Dutch Resistance to collect discarded weapons and equipment from Ginkel Heath for use during Operation *Pegasus*.**

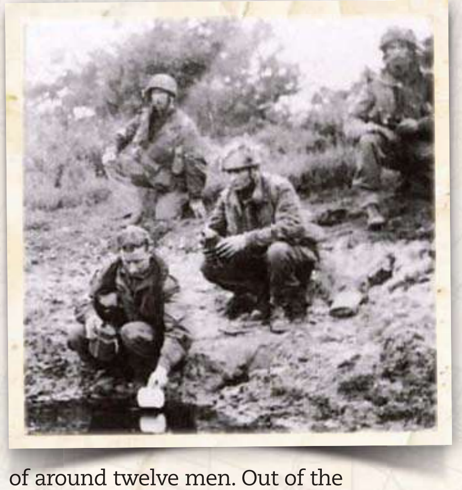
whilst the Dutch drivers covered them with empty sacks so that they looked like trucks full of potatoes. If the vehicles were stopped and searched at a German check-point the men would have to jump out and, hopefully, overpower the sentries!

During their journey, the lorries encountered two check-points; incredibly, each time the Germans simply waved them through. The little convoy passed the town of Ede and drew up by the woods at the side of the road. "It was now nearly dark," recalled Deane-Drummond, "and we filed off down a footpath. For ten minutes we stumbled over tree trunks and brambles till we came to an open area where we met the rest. The whole party was now a hundred and twenty strong."

Food for one day, blankets, arms and ammunition had been laid up in advance – the evaders were only too aware that they might have to fight their way to the river. By dark some 139 men had been brought together. They waited until 21.00 hours when the moon was up. The party was due to arrive at the crossing point at 00.00 hours, which gave them three hours to cover the three miles to the river. Where possible the men walked in pairs to reduce the length of the column, but sometimes the footpath through the trees was so narrow that they had to move in single file.

"We had a Dutch farmer lead us through the woods and the last 1,000 yards to the river was across open meadows, through a gap 250 yards wide between two enemy posts, sited 300 yards back from the river", recounted Tatham-Warter in his subsequent report. "We then had to move west along the river bank for 800 yards. It would have been a hazardous move with a highly trained company, but with a mixed bag of 120 parachutists, largely RAMC orderlies, ten British and US pilots, two Russians and fifteen Dutchmen, all of whom were unfit and many of whom had never seen their leaders in daylight, it soon became obvious that our chances of slipping through unobserved were remote."[6]

BELOW: **Before their escape across the Rhine, the largest group of evaders was sheltered in this barn near Ede. It was called 'de Kooi', but referred to by the British as 'The Barn'. Amongst those who were housed here were RAF aircrew, soldiers from the Reconnaissance Corps, survivors from the RAMC, and men from 10th Parachute Battalion. The evaders here formed quite a community - they even had their own library! Following the departure of the evaders, the farmer burned the barn to the ground to hide the many names and units that had been carved into the wooden beams.**



RIGHT: **Four members of 133 Parachute Field Ambulance RAMC pictured whilst in hiding in woods near Otterlo, north-east of Ede, before Operation *Pegasus*. From left to right are: Sergeant J.C. Floyd (filling mug); Corporal F.J. Pimperton; RSM G.L. Bowe; and Private Eastough.**

## A GERMAN PATROL

Tatham-Warter felt certain that the noise his party made must have been heard by the German sentries. "It sounded as if a whole herd of elephants was thundering out of the woods," he remarked.[7] That said, he believed it was only because they made such a racket that the Germans chose not to interfere. "I think it was this fact", Tatham-Warter later wrote, "which probably misled the Boche as to our numbers, added to the fact that the US parachutists on the south bank had been patrolling very vigorously on previous nights, that got us through."

However, soon after one group of evaders had started travelling westwards, the unthinkable happened. The head of the column had, quite literally, bumped into a German patrol of around twelve men. Out of the darkness came the challenge: "*Halt, wer ist da?*" For the Allies, the meeting, in Tatham-Warter's own laconic words, "caused some consternation".

One of the men at the head of group, Captain Tom Wainwright who was acting as a guide, reacted quickly and shouted at those with weapons to open fire. A few paces behind him was Lance Corporal John O'Reilly – like Wainwright, he was a survivor of the 156th Parachute Battalion. O'Reilly had already spotted the German soldiers as their pale outline had emerged from the darkness:

BRANDWEER
GEM. EDE
1
4737

ABOVE: **Jan Peelen's barn, near Renkum, which was used for storing some of the uniforms and weapons needed for Operation *Pegasus.* This barn was the evader's last halt before they reached the floodplain of the Lower Rhine. It was near here the Dutch guides, principally Maarten van den Bent, departed company with the evaders. The barn is location P 3 on the map.** (HMP)

ABOVE: **After Tatham-Warter had given his last instructions the group of evaders moved off from the rendezvous at around 21.30 hours on 22 October 1944. Passing the 'Nol in 't Bosch', the men walked the next couple of miles through woodland. It is believed that this track, location P 2 on the map, was part of their route.** (HMP)

ABOVE RIGHT: **The hotel 'Nol in 't Bosch' which is located in the woods north-west of the Dutch village Renkum. This is location 1 on the map.** (HMP)

"Just then I saw the Jerrys", he later recalled. "Two or three at first, then more followed from what looked like a gateway in a hedge. I ran forward, levelled the Bren and fired, brushing past Maarten [Maarten van den Bent, a member of the Dutch Resistance] in the process … My fire was restricted, but it was important to get the first shots off and try to panic them. I remember shouting as I ran at them with my finger on the trigger until the magazine on the Bren was empty."[8]

At the same moment that Lance Corporal O'Reilly sprung into action, Captain Wainwright opened fire with his revolver. Another of the leading section who returned fire and "let loose a burst from his Sten gun", forcing Wainwright to take cover, was Private Ken Kirkham of the 10th Parachute Battalion. Such prompt action had the desired effect and the German patrol immediately scattered – apparently without firing a shot.

## SLIDING ON THEIR BELLIES

As the column started to cautiously edge forward, Lance Corporal O'Reilly found a single dead German lying on the ground. As he searched the darkness for any further sign of the enemy, another paratrooper stepped past him and plucked a Luger pistol from the dead soldier's hand. No further sign of the German patrol was encountered, presumably because they did not want to become embroiled with such a large group.

By this stage discipline amongst the evaders was becoming increasingly difficult to maintain. In the dark the men banged and tripped into each other and their cursing and shouting could be heard for several hundred feet around. Some men lost contact with the group and wandered off by themselves but, apart from one lost Russian, the column held together as the river drew closer.

When the group reached the open meadow that marked the final approaches to the Lower Rhine, Tatham-Warter ordered the men to crawl to its bank two hundred yards away. At five feet intervals the men slid on their bellies across the grass to slip over the top of the bank into the mud below.

Over on the Allied side of the river, Airey Neave was waiting nervously. "At midnight, there was a movement among the dark shapes around me," he remembered, "and I could hear light splashes as the boats were launched. As they were lifted from the barn, there was the squeal of little pigs, for in the darkness someone had trodden on a

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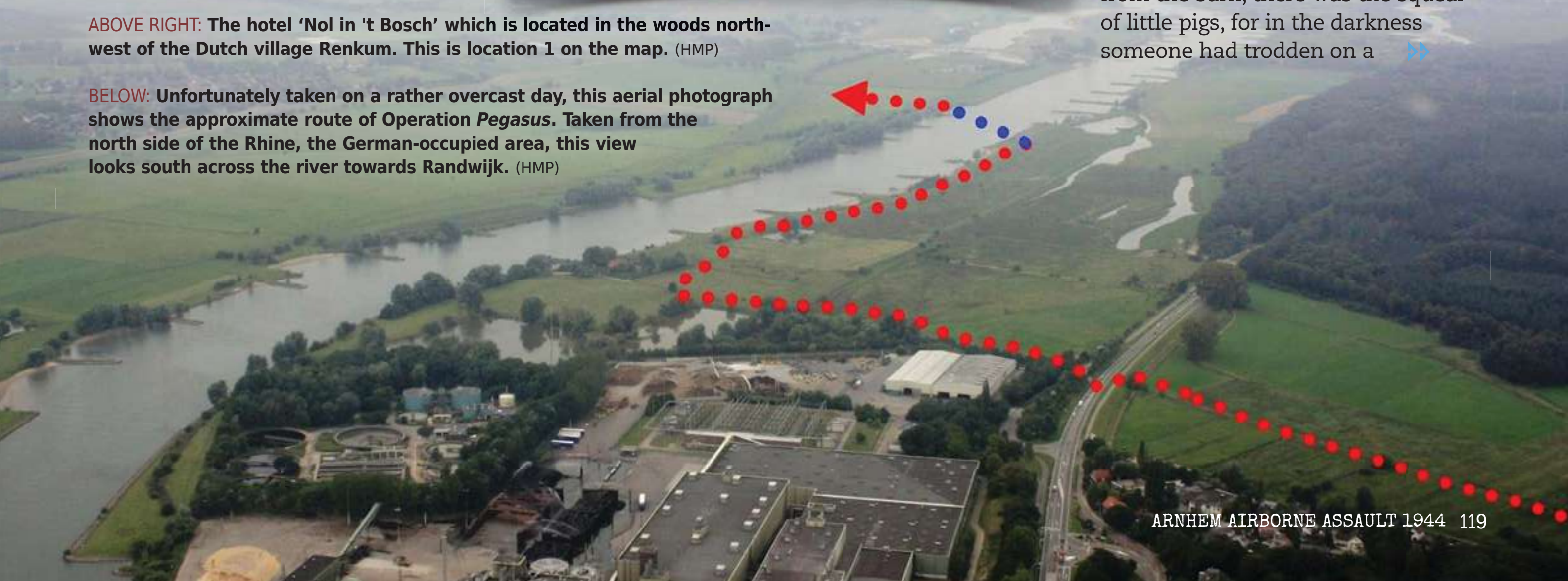


BELOW: **Unfortunately taken on a rather overcast day, this aerial photograph shows the approximate route of Operation *Pegasus*. Taken from the north side of the Rhine, the German-occupied area, this view looks south across the river towards Randwijk.** (HMP) litter. I could feel the men around me grow tense because such sounds would carry far across the river. But nothing happened … opposite was no sound, no sign of life.”[9]

It had also been arranged that a single gun on the Allied side would fire an arc of ten red tracer shells due north at hourly intervals to help the escapers locate the crossing point in the dark. When the escapers had found the designated crossing place, referred to as “Digby”, they would respond by flashing a red “V” by torch.

## EASY COMPANY

At 00.05 hours the “V” was at last seen across the river – but it was approximately 800 yards to the east. Dobie and a Canadian officer, Lieutenant Leo Heaps, who had made a spectacular escape from Arnhem by swimming across the Rhine, went across on the boats to act as “beach-masters” on the German side, to help direct the escapers into the boats. The boats themselves were to be manned by a mixture of men from the Royal Engineer units attached to the 43rd (Wessex) Division and their escort, ‘Easy’ Company, 2nd Battalion, 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment.

Three American officers and seventeen men of ‘Easy’ Company went to where the boats had been hidden the previous evening. “It was, as usual, a murky night, with a drizzle adding to the obscurity,” recorded Stephen Ambrose who made ‘Easy’ Company famous as the *Band of Brothers*. “The shivering men edged the boats into the river … The men crossed with pounding hearts but without incident. They leaped out of the boats and moved forward.”[10] ‘Easy’ Company then established a small perimeter, while patrols were sent out east along the river bank to locate the errant evaders.

“I headed towards the place where I thought I had seen the red light”, recalled Heaps. “After a little time I heard a strange sound like wind rustling through the meadow. But there was no wind. Instead, out of the grass came the sound of a multitude of shuffling feet … Here were our evaders.”[11]

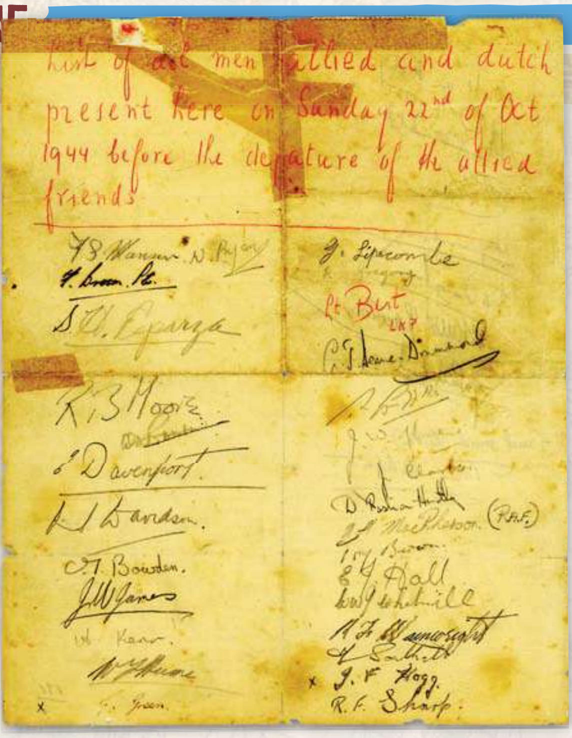
Unaware that the boats were closing in upon them, the evaders were becoming increasingly anxious. “We reached the chosen point and gave a pre-arranged light signal,” wrote Deane-Drummond. “Five, ten, fifteen minutes went by and nothing happened … Our imagination conjured up a hundred and one things that might have gone wrong.”

Then out of the mist came the question: “Are you people by any chance looking for some boats?” It was the most welcome words Tatham-Warter had ever heard. “Well”, replied the Major, “actually we are rather”.[12]

## TEA AND BUNS

Heaps directed the long line of tired men towards the boats and the crossing began. It took three trips to get all the men across the Rhine. “As soon as the boats grounded on the far side we leapt out,” remembered a jubilant Deane-Drummond, “and guided by a white tape walked half a mile to a small farmhouse, where tea and buns had been provided”.

Amongst the evaders was one Private Boardman who, having pretended to be an inmate of the Wolfheze mental hospital, had once again been helped by the Resistance to get down to the river bank with the other escapers. “We got to the other side okay,” he explained, “and went to some trucks on a road close by. We were told not to smoke (no chance of that, we had none) and not to make too much noise, because the road was under observation as we soon found out. Mortar bombs began falling; one dropped close to a truck two behind us, luckily nobody was hurt.”[13]



List of all men allied and dutch present here on Sunday 22nd of Oct 1944 before the departure of the allied friends

G. Lipscombe

Lt Burt

C.G. Deane-Drummond

R.B. Moore

Davenport

C.T. Bowden.

J.W. James

E.G. Hall

J.F. Hogg

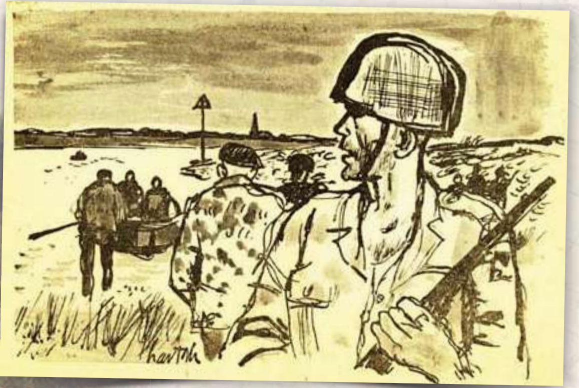
R.F. Sharp

ABOVE: **A list of names of some of the evaders gathered on the Dutch side of the Lower Rhine just before the crossing itself on the night of 22/23 October 1944.** (COURTESY OF ROLAND BOEKHORST – CUSTODIAN OF THE AIRBORNE MUSEUM OOSTERBEEK)

ABOVE RIGHT: **One of the hideouts used in Operation *Pegasus II* – the chicken shed at the Wolfswinkel family's farm in Lunteren.**

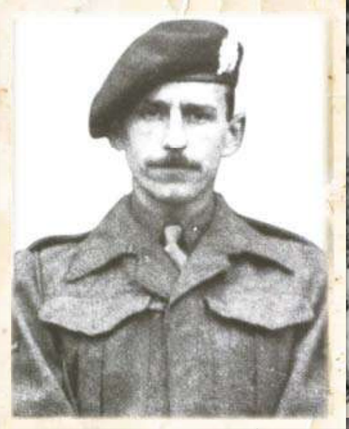
It was soon after this that the only airborne casualty of this operation occurred. In order to be moved away from the small farmhouse (the US battalion's headquarters) towards Nijmegen, the evaders were packed on to a fleet of US Army vehicles. Major Tony Hibbert, who commanded the 1st Parachute Brigade's Headquarters, had positioned himself on the bonnet of an overcrowded

ABOVE: **Looking across the floodplain of the River Rhine towards “Digby” – roughly the area marked as P 5 on the map. The triangular marker indicated by the arrow is believed to in the same position as the one in the drawing opposite.** (HMP)

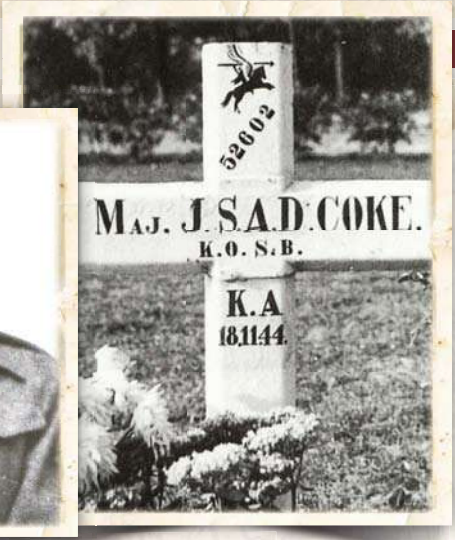


ABOVE: **A drawing showing some of the evaders clambering into the boats at “Digby” – the crossing point on the north side of the Rhine (location 6 on the map). During the ninety or so minutes that it took to get all the evaders across, the Germans did open fire sporadically and some mortar rounds fell near the crossing.**

RIGHT: **Whilst attempting to take a short cut during Operation *Pegasus II* one party under Major John Coke of the 7th Battalion King's Own Scottish Borderers stumbled into a German patrol. It is believed that 33-year-old Major Coke died of wounds he received in the resulting firefight.**

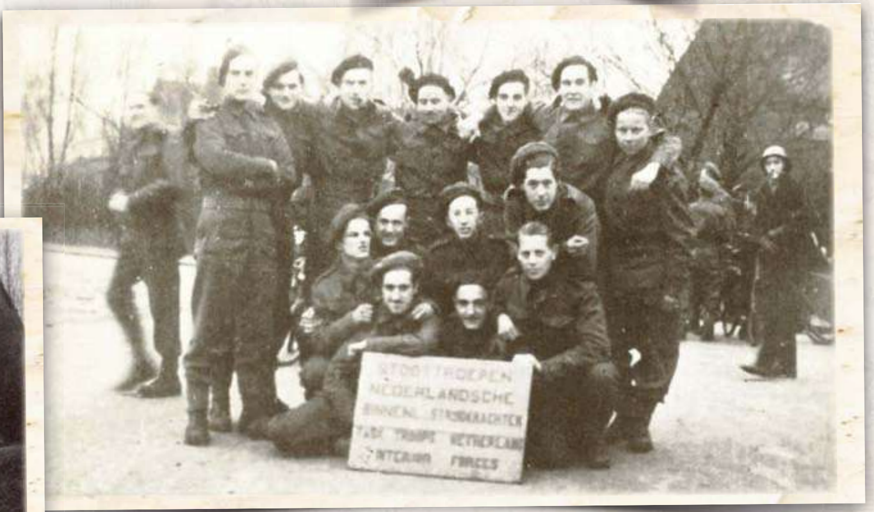


BELOW: **A group shot of members of the Dutch Resistance, including participants of Operation *Pegasus* after their safe arrival at Nijmegen.**



MAJOR
J.S.A.D. COKE
THE KING'S OWN
SCOTTISH BORDERERS
AIRBORNE
18TH NOVEMBER 1944 AGE 33
FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH

ABOVE: **Major John Coke's final resting place: plot 23. B. 17. in Arnhem Oosterbeek War Cemetery. Not far away is the grave of Major Edward Coke, Sherwood Foresters (Notts and Derby Regiment) attached to 6th Battalion King's Own Scottish Borderers – John Coke's younger brother. Edward Coke was also killed in the fighting at Arnhem, on 27 September 1944.**



Jeep. During the journey, the Jeep's driver failed to spot the fact that the vehicle in front had stopped. Pulling his legs out of the way with a fraction of a second to spare, Hibbert's Jeep slammed into the obstruction. Hibbert was thrown to the ground, breaking his right leg in the process. "The air was blue with his language," remembered Private Boardman.[14]

## OPERATION PEGASUS II

Operation *Pegasus* had been an unqualified success. Post-war research would indicate that just two men from the column failed to make it across the river.

The first was a Russian evader, W. Kapustin, who is believed to have been captured by the Germans. The second was an RAF pilot, Warrant Officer K. Brant. Brant's Supermarine Spitfire IX, PT395 of 349 Squadron, had been shot down by flak on 6 October 1944.[15] Having crash-landed south-east of Utrecht, Brant was spirited away by the Resistance. He was soon joined by three USAAF aircrew – all four participated in *Pegasus*. It would seem that Brant had become separated from the rest of the column after sheltering in a haystack. Despite desperately trying to re-join his comrades, including an attempt at swimming alone across the Rhine (during which he was forced to turn back because of the cold), Brant was captured by the Germans later in the morning of the 23rd October.

The Rhine was, effectively, the front line and the whole area was swarming with nervous soldiers and energetic Gestapo. That so many Allied servicemen could be concealed from the Germans was astonishing; that so many could be moved considerable distances across country and across such a large river was even more incredible.

One hundred and fifty men had been rescued but there was at least as many men still in hiding on the German side of the Rhine. Airey Neave could not resist the temptation to try and repeat the success of *Pegasus*. But *Pegasus II* was a disaster.

The second operation, which took place on 17 November 1944, was to follow the same pattern as the original. Once again the men were assembled by the Dutch Resistance and guided down to the Lower Rhine but further east than before. Unfortunately, the column of 160 evaders became hopelessly fragmented in the dark. Breaking up into small groups, the men wandered around in circles and many of them stumbled into German emplacements.

Eventually seven men were rescued. Many others were taken prisoner, some of whom were wounded, including a large number of their Dutch helpers.

The sad postscript to the remarkable *Pegasus* story is that the Germans rounded up and executed 116 Dutchmen. Their only crime was that they tried to help a few stranded soldiers return to their comrades. ●

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:** The author and *Britain at War* team would like to extend their grateful thanks to Jurriaan de Mol and Thijs Bisschops for their assistance during our visit to the site of the events described here; to Roland Boekhorst, Custodian of the Airborne Museum 'Hartenstein'; to Paul Tirion, Airborne Museum 'Hartenstein'; and, lastly, to Gerard Gijsbertsen of the Society of Friends of the Airborne Museum – without his kind help and assistance this article would not have been possible.

## NOTES

1. Established in December 1940, British Military Intelligence Section 9, or MI9, was a department of the British Directorate of Military Intelligence, part of the War Office. It was charged with aiding Resistance groups in enemy occupied territory and recovering Allied personnel who found themselves behind enemy lines (for example, aircrew who had been shot down and soldiers stranded after Dunkirk). It also communicated with British PoWs and sent them advice and equipment.
2. A. Neave, *Saturday at MI9* (Hodder and Stoughton, Sevenoaks 1985), pp.283-4.
3. John Nichol & Tony Rennell, *Home Run, op. cit.*, pp. 365-7.
4. On 19 September 1944, whilst trying to withdraw their company from Vulheze near Arnhem, Captain Wainwright and another officer were cut off by the Germans. For a week they hid in woods and for a further three days in a greenhouse at Wolfheze living on rations stolen from a German Hospital. After selecting from their map an isolated farm at Rhenen, they made their way to it and there found help.
5. L. Heaps, *The Evaders: The Story of the most Amazing Mass Escape of World War II* (Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, 1976), p.184.
6. Major A.D. Tatham-Warter, 2nd Parachute Battalion, Evasion Report: 21st September – 23rd October 1944, provided by: www.pegasusarchive.org
7. J. O'Reilly, *op. cit.*, p.314.
8. J. O'Reilly, *Ibid*, pp.314-315. For more than twenty years the author, John O'Reilly, accompanied his father to reunions of the Arnhem veterans, meeting many of his former comrades. Following his father's death in 2002, Mr. O'Reilly resolved to write a history detailing the battalion's role as part of Operation *Market Garden*.
9. Neave, *op. cit.*, p.292.
10. Stephen E. Ambrose, *Band of Brothers* (Pocket Books, London, 2001), pp.158-9.
11. Heaps, *op. cit.*, pp. 195-6.
12. A. D. Tatham-Warter, *Escape Across the Rhine* (Airborne Museum Hartenstein, 1999), pp.31-2.
13. Peter-Alexander van Teesling, *op. cit.*, p.67.
14. J. O'Reilly, *op. cit.*, pp.316. Accounts vary on what actually happened to Major Hibbert. Another one, for example, states that he "accidentally fell off" the Jeep and broke "both of his legs in the fall".
15. N. Franks, *RAF Fighter Command Losses of the Second World War: Volume 3*, (Midland Publishing, Earl Shilton, 2000), p.106.

# GLORIOUS DEFEAT OR BRILLIANT SUCCESS

**Described as a "magnificent disaster" by Major G.G. Norton and as a "glorious defeat" by Peter Harclerode, Operation *Market Garden* was also regarded by General Brereton and others as "a brilliant success". Who was right?**

**IN HIS assessment of *Market Garden* the historian Martin Middlebrook opens by asking, "was it worth it?" This is quite a different question than asking "should *Market Garden* have been attempted?" which is where we will begin.**

Amongst the senior Allied commanders there was considerable backing for the operation. We know that Eisenhower could see the potential benefits of capturing the bridges that would lead into northern Germany and even General Omar N. Bradley, one of Montgomery's sternest critics, was impressed with the boldness of the operation, describing it as "one of the most imaginative of the war". We also have seen that Browning, the man who thought that the Arnhem road bridge might be one too far, said that his men could hold out there for four days, twice the expected duration. In his memoirs Roy Urquhart declared that, "We were ready for anything. If there was a tendency to take light-heartedly the less encouraging factors, and even the unknown ones, it was understandable."[1]

So at every level down as far as divisional command, support for the scheme was to be found. Such support, though, was not universal and there were plenty of disapproving voices, and these included Major General Sir Francis de Guingand, Montgomery's Chief-of-Staff. Many others had deep reservations but not all of these men felt it was appropriate to disclose their concerns at the time. Nevertheless, this exciting operation caught the imagination of many more key figures than just Omar Bradley.

It is easy to see why this should be. The most obvious is that success would have opened up the North German plains to the highly mobile Allied armies. There was a real

BELOW: **Operation *Anger*, the plan that led to the final liberation of Arnhem in 1945, proceeded according to plan and within four days Arnhem was totally under Allied control. Here a Churchill AVRE moves through the city on 13 April 1945.** (HMP)

prospect that the war could be ended within weeks. Instead the war dragged on for eight more months.

The capture of Berlin by the British and Americans would have placed them in a far better position when the post-war bargaining began. It was clear that the map of Europe would have to be re-drawn after the war and the Soviets were unlikely to offer up any of the territory they had seized by the end of hostilities. The greater the land occupied by the Allies, the greater the prospects for democracy across Europe. Also the Dutch would have been liberated and would not have had to endure the 'Hunger Winter'. Some 4,500,000 Dutch people in the German-occupied part of the Netherlands endured virtual starvation throughout the winter of 1944-45. Approximately 22,000 died. The problem of the V-2 rockets attacking the UK would also have been solved. The V-2s continued to hit the south-east of England until March 1945. An estimated 2,754 civilians were killed in London by these attacks with another 6,523 injured.

## INTELLIGENCE

Having accepted that there were good reasons for attempting to seize the bridges over the Maas, the Waal and the Rhine, why then did it fail so disastrously? Planning is everything, and particularly so in military operations. In Operation *Market Garden*, the seeds of its failure were sown long before the guns began to fire.

We know that Sosabowski was concerned that little attention had been given to the enemy forces and that Brian Urquhart had ordered a reconnaissance which showed the presence of German tanks. It will

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MAIN PICTURE: **A small crowd of "women and children watch Arnhem survivors filing into church, where they held a memorial service for their comrades of the British 1st Airborne Division who fell in the epic battle", in an "English market town", 19 October 1944.** (HMP)

be recalled that he caused such a fuss about the strength of the German forces that he was placed on sick leave. He would not have been the only one to receive copies of the photographs or of the ULTRA intercepts; they would also have been studied by Colonel Gordon Walch the Intelligence Officer at First Allied Airborne Army headquarters.

The Airborne Army HQ also received information about enemy armour in the vicinity of Arnhem directly from Wing Commander Asher Lee. An RAF air intelligence officer posted to the First Airborne Army who had also had access to ULTRA interceptions, Lee was fully aware of the German armoured units in Arnhem. Lee took this information to Brereton. The Airborne Army commander told Lee to report the matter to 21st Army Group. When Lee reached Montgomery's headquarters he could find no-one who would listen to him.[2]

The airborne troops were basically light infantry and were not ideally equipped, or expected, to combat large numbers of enemy armoured vehicles. The operation had been proposed on the basis that Arnhem, which was not on the front line, was only occupied by second line troops. Exciting and ambitious *Market Garden* may have been, but at this point Browning or Brereton should have called the operation off, or at least revised the plan.

There was also no point in postponing it until further investigations were made regarding the presence of the German tanks as with the passing of every day the enemy was becoming stronger. It was then or never. Yet the operation went ahead regardless and the reason why that decision was taken is worthy of further examination.

## A DROP TOO FAR

"I remember a feeling of shock and disbelief when I heard we were to drop seven miles from the bridge," recalled Corporal Bob Allen of the 3rd Parachute Battalion. "I kept my thoughts to myself. The general feeling in my company was that we should drop on the polder immediately south of the objective, rush across the bridge and establish ourselves in the town. We felt that once 1st Para Brigade was there it could hold out indefinitely."[3]

TOP LEFT: **On 12 April 1945, elements of the Canadian First Army, chiefly the British 49th (West Riding) Division and the 5th Canadian (Armoured) Division launched Operation *Anger* to finally liberate Arnhem. Here a Universal carrier is loaded aboard a Buffalo prior to being transported across the River Ijssel, east of Arnhem, on 13 April 1945.** (HMP)

TOP RIGHT: **Work begins to rebuild the devastated city of Arnhem after its liberation.** (DUTCH NATIONAL ARCHIVES)

The one great advantage that the Airborne troops had was surprise. The Germans would never imagine that Arnhem would be attacked at that time. The front line was more than sixty miles away. Entirely unprepared, it would take them some time to organise themselves effectively.

If the Airborne troops could be landed close to the Arnhem road bridge they stood a good chance of taking the bridge before the Germans knew what was happening. This had been accomplished on D-Day, with the capture of the Pegasus and Horsa bridges by glider-borne troops. Unlike D-Day, though, this assault was to be made in daylight and the RAF declared that they would suffer prohibitive losses to enemy anti-aircraft fire, particularly as they banked round over the heavily-defended Deelen airport. It was also reported by the local Dutch Resistance that the ground south of the bridge was very soft. This would mean that

ABOVE: **As the Allied advance in Europe continues, a Sherman flail tank supports infantry of the 2nd Glasgow Highlanders at the start of Operation *Veritable*, 8 February 1945. In the background are American gliders which landed during Operation *Market Garden* in September 1944. *Veritable* was the northern part of an Allied pincer movement intended to clear German forces from the area between the Rhine and Maas rivers.** (HMP)

BELOW: **British airborne forces in action again during Operation *Varsity*. As part of this attack, the British 6th Airborne Division was ordered to capture the villages of Schnappenberg and Hamminkeln, clear part of the Diersfordter Wald (Diersfordt Forest) of German forces, and secure three bridges over the River Ijssel. Here, airborne troops are pictured amongst the wreckage of a glider on the edge of a landing zone near the village of Hamminkeln, 25 March 1945.** (HMP)

## "90 PER CENT SUCCESSFUL"

MONTGOMERY STATED that *Market Garden* had been "90 per cent successful" because the ground forces had covered nine-tenths of their intended distance.

When Air Marshal Arthur Tedder heard this he observed that "one jumps off a cliff with an even higher success rate, until the last few inches". Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands' also said "My country can never afford the luxury of another Montgomery success."[12]

the nose wheels of the gliders would be buried into the ground when they landed, causing them to buckle and collapse or tip right over.

The delivery of airborne troops close to Arnhem Bridge was actually proposed and accepted by the RAF during the planning of *Comet*. But with the expanded *Market* operation there would not be enough experienced RAF pilots available and much reliance would have to be placed upon US pilots who had not been trained in such precision landing. This could well lead to disaster, so the drop zones and landing zones were placed in the open countryside seven to eight miles from Arnhem.

Despite the Germans having hours to prepare for the arrival of the paratroopers, a major part of John Frost's 2nd Parachute Battalion did actually reach the bridge. The drop of the 1st Parachute Brigade was completed soon after 14.00 hours and Frost's men reached the bridge at 20.00 hours, six hours later – so much for the element of surprise.

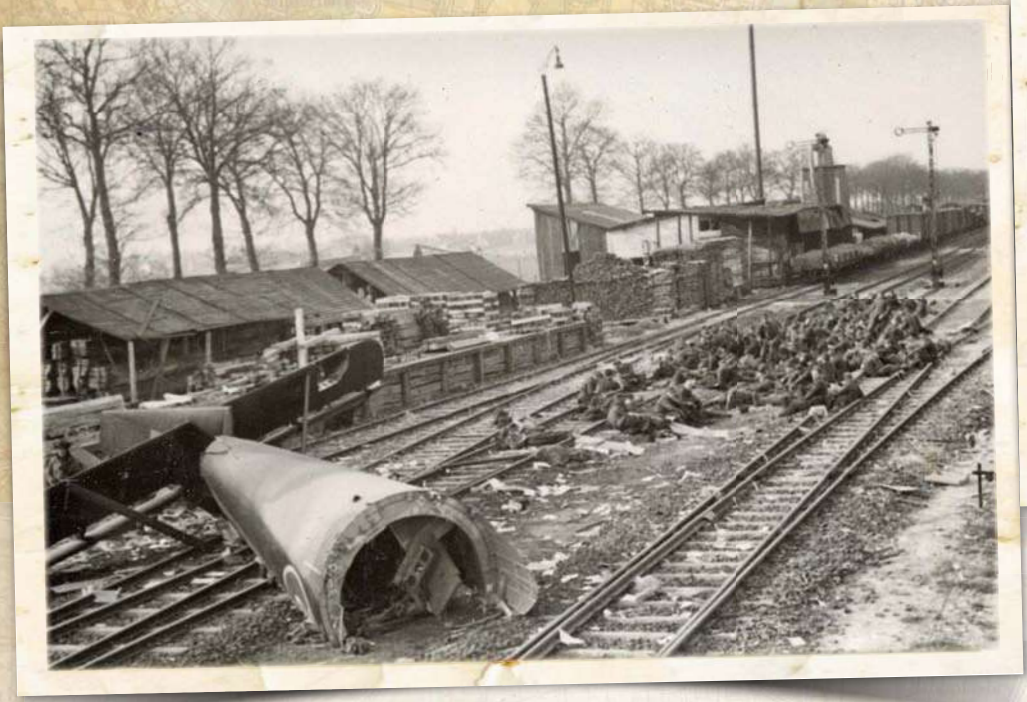
RIGHT: **The view from the cockpit of a Horsa glider during the airborne drop east of the Rhine, 25 March 1945.** (HMP)

BELOW: **Airborne soldiers offer water to German prisoners from a *Luftwaffe* field division during the Rhine crossing, 24-25 March 1945.** (HMP)

The landing and drop zones were also in roughly the same area – to the north-west of Arnhem – which made it easy for the Germans to organise their defence, having only to face the troops coming from one direction.

The obvious counter to the argument that the tugs and transport 'planes would have been exposed to flak, is that the Allied air forces, which had almost complete supremacy in the air, should have been able to knock out the German anti-aircraft batteries in advance of the landings. Indeed, lack of fighter cover, both for the aerial operations and in terms of ground support, was a feature of much of the Arnhem fighting.

One aspect of *Market* that does not seem to have been considered is that the so-called airborne carpet had a very large hole in it north of Nijmegen. We know that the area between Nijmegen and Arnhem was almost devoid of Germans troops in the first day or two and whilst the area was low-lying and swampy and, like the ground to the south of the Arnhem Bridge, probably impracticable for gliders, ▹▹



ABOVE: **The rear end of a British Horsa glider straddles the railway line near Hamminkeln railway station, 25 March 1945. In the background a party of German prisoners waits to be moved to the rear.** (HMP)

ABOVE: **Accompanied by Lieutenant-General Miles Dempsey, General Officer Commanding the British 2nd Army, Winston Churchill crosses the Rhine in a Jeep on 26 March 1945.** (HMP)

paratroopers could have landed virtually unopposed. No doubt the reason for this omission was a lack of transport aircraft. Yet it is difficult to understand why the US 82nd Airborne Division was not dropped on either side of the Waal to take control of the road to Arnhem and attack the Germans at Nijmegen simultaneously from the front and the rear. This is possibly what Lieutenant General Walter Smith meant when he suggested moving one of the US Airborne divisions further north. It may be recalled that this was not taken up by Montgomery.

## AIR COVER

Browning apparently made ninety-five requests for air strikes but only forty-nine were carried out by the RAF. He believed that the reason for this was that the RAF had been "over cautious" and "conservative". Poor weather was certainly the reason why some of Browning's requests for support from the RAF were denied. Yet one would have imagined that with men being killed on the ground, risks would have been taken.

The main reason given by the RAF, however, is that they said the targets were "insufficiently identifiable to warrant an air strike". One of the main reasons for this is that there was no direct means by which Urquhart could communicate with the RAF. Because of the failure of the 1st Airborne Division's wirelesses, messages had to be sent through the artillery. They then had to pass the signal onto their own divisional command and the XXX Corps artillery. From there the signal had to be routed through XXX HQ, then to the Second Army, then to 83 Group RAF, before being passed onto the airfields. From initial request to strike took one hour and five minutes. By that time the situation on the ground could well have changed completely.

The fault, therefore, lay not in the squadrons but with the planners. A thought-through system of calling in air strikes should have been put into place before the operation was mounted. This is illustrated by the fact that when an improved radio link was finally established, the RAF gave good support to the ground troops. By then, unfortunately, it was too late to affect the final outcome of the battle.

## ROYAL RECOGNITION?

DURING A debate in Parliament on Tuesday, 3 October 1944, the Prime Minister was asked if the government was considering "recommending to His Majesty that some special honour or designation should be granted to the British Airborne Forces, in recognition of the heroic deeds at Arnhem".

To this Churchill replied: "I do not think that the award of a special medal would be appropriate. Indeed, were such special distinction to be considered for this very gallant episode it would have to be considered with many other noble and memorable battles and actions that have taken place and may yet take place, at sea and in the air, as well as on land."

A further suggestion of introducing the designation "Royal British Airborne Forces", or "something similar", was also declined.

MAIN PICTURE: **Airborne troops drive a Jeep out of a crashed Horsa glider during operations east of the Rhine, 25 March 1945. Involving more than 16,000 paratroopers and several thousand aircraft, undertaken on 24 March 1945, *Varsity* was the largest airborne operation in history to be conducted on a single day and in one location.** (HMP)

ABOVE: **A Universal carrier of 12th King’s Royal Rifle Corps, 8th Armoured Brigade, equipped with a .30 calibre Browning machine-gun, pictured in action against a German position in the Netherlands, 2 April 1945.** (HMP)

BELOW: **An Achilles tank destroyer on the east bank of the Rhine moves up to link with airborne forces whose abandoned Horsa gliders can be seen in the background, 26 March 1945.** (HMP)

## COMMUNICATIONS FAILURE

The inability of the 1st Airborne to make radio contact with the air forces was also to prove extremely costly with regard to the re-supply operations. The first main supply drop was on D+2. Because of the limited number of aircraft available, the airborne troops were not able to carry all the food and ammunition they required when they were dropped on D-Day and after two days of fighting the men badly need to be re-supplied.

Unaware of the situation on the ground, the re-supply aircraft dropped the supplies into the pre-arranged areas which, by then were no longer in Allied hands. This situation continued to hamper operations. When the Airborne troops tried to place marker strips on the ground to help the pilots, the Germans sniped at the men and immediately mortared the area.

Radio failure in the early stages at Arnhem meant that Urquhart was unable to contact all his battalions. As a result he drove off to find out what was happening and found himself trapped for almost two days out of touch with the rest of his division. If he had full radio contact with his battalions it is not improbable that he would have been able to either concentrate them for a concerted attack upon the hurriedly organised German blocking line, or to have directed them quickly down to the route to the bridge that Frost had used successfully.

## SITTING AROUND AND DRINKING TEA

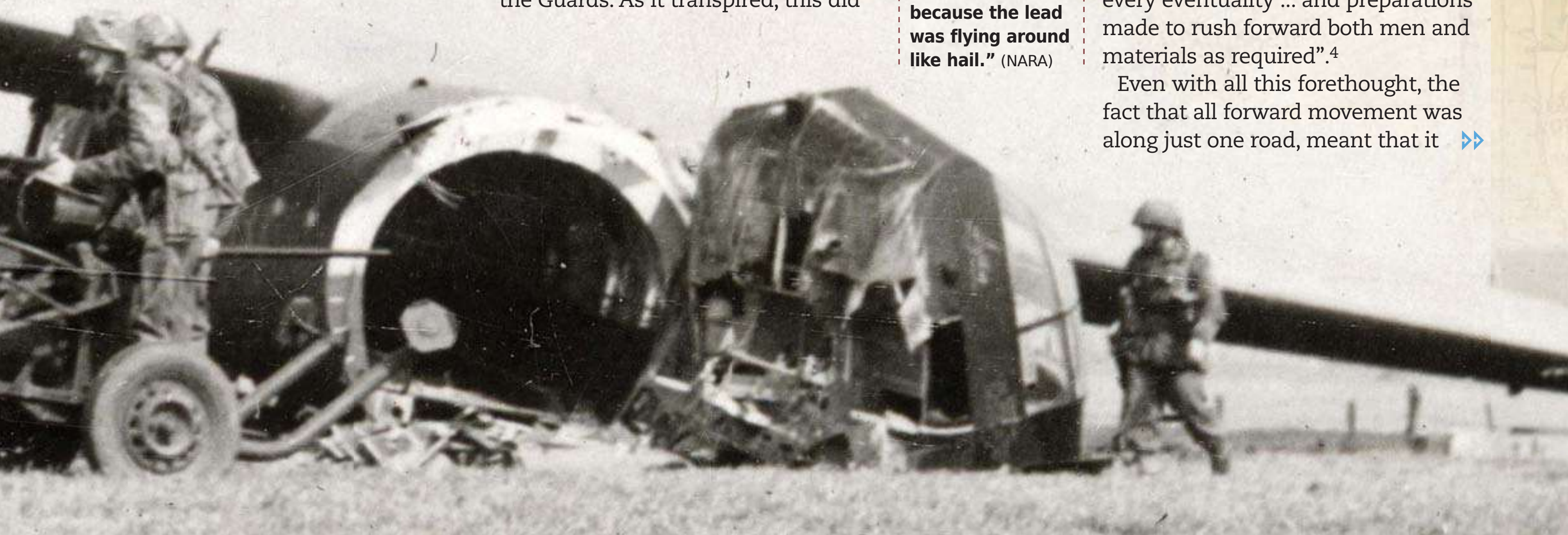
The 1st Airborne Division to a large degree accomplished its primary mission, in preventing the Germans from demolishing the Arnhem road bridge. Montgomery had asked for the bridge to be held for two days. Browning offered him four. Frost’s men held out for almost five.

Much has been written about XXX Corps’ apparent lack of drive. There are, however many factors to consider before making a judgment. The Guards’ decision to halt for the night on D-Day does seem extraordinary. As we know, there was only one road for them to follow, so they could not have got lost in the night, and the darkness would have presented the enemy with the same problems as the Guards. As it transpired, this did not have a bearing on the operation as the Son Bridge had already been demolished, so the Guards would have been held up there regardless of their decision to halt for the night after travelling just seven miles.

The destruction of the Son Bridge did significantly delay XXX Corps, even though Horrocks, it might be recalled, had been acutely aware that the Germans might demolish one or more of the bridges on the route to Arnhem. In anticipation of this, he had 9,000 sappers and 2,300 vehicles ready and waiting for just such an eventuality. He claims, with some justification, that in this regard he had done his best “to prepare for every eventuality ... and preparations made to rush forward both men and materials as required”.[4]

Even with all this forethought, the fact that all forward movement was along just one road, meant that it ▷▷

ABOVE: **Another crossing of the Rhine. Here soldiers from the US 89th Infantry Division crouch down in their assault boat as it comes under enemy fire near the German town of Sankt Goar, on the west bank of the Middle Rhine, 26 March 1945. “I drew an assault boat to cross in – just my luck,” recalled one US veteran. “We all tried to crawl under each other because the lead was flying around like hail.”** (NARA)



took hours for the sappers' vehicles to reach the front. The Allies were in fact fortunate that this (and the railway bridge at Oosterbeek) were the only important bridges that were blown up by the Germans. It is understood that a failure in the detonation system was the only reason that the Nijmegen Bridge was not destroyed. With that bridge blown, the operation would have ground to a complete halt.

Inevitably, the question of the Guards' refusal to rush on towards Arnhem as soon as they were over the Waal must be faced. That they had orders to wait for the infantry seems incontestable and they still believed that they could reach Arnhem as soon as the 43rd (Wessex) Division arrived and saw no reason to disobey orders.

Yet, according to one source, Browning arrived at Nijmegen that evening to find the Guards held up. He found two Guards officers and asked them what the delay was, to be told that the leading Irish tanks had been knocked out and were blocking the road. Browning asked if the tanks could be pushed off the road, but was told that it was not possible.[5] If Browning did not pull rank and insist on an immediate advance upon Arnhem, regardless of the hazards involved, we can hardly ascribe blame to the tank commanders.

ABOVE LEFT and RIGHT: **Seventeen years after Operation *Market Garden* veterans gather at the Airborne Monument in Oosterbeek to remember all those who lost their lives. The foundation stone for this monument, located near the Utrechtseweg and which was designed by Jacob Maris, was laid in September 1945 by General Urquhart. It takes the form of a stone pillar crowned with five carved figures. The figures on the outside are men and soldiers, with one man at the top representing freedom.** (DUTCH NATIONAL ARCHIVES)

BEVEROL
AUTO-MOTOR-OLIE

BELOW: **Canadian troops from the Régiment de Maisonneuve moving through Holten in Holland, en route for Rijssen, on 9 April 1945.** (NARA)

An independent view was taken by Air Commodore Darvall when he visited the front line on 22 September, D+5: "It was appreciated nowhere south of the 30 Corps area quite how tenuous was the hold on the road. A small area was held by our forces in the Nijmegen district. North of Eindhoven, we literally held nothing but the road itself until the bridge over the Maas River was reached, and then the area occupied by the 30 Corps reinforced by the 101 Airborne Division was only about six miles wide. The whole of it was under shell-fire from German positions to the north and east."[6]

## THE REASON WHY

The man who devised the operation, Field Marshal Sir Bernard Law Montgomery, declared himself an "unrepentant advocate" of *Market Garden* even after the war.

In his account of the operation he gives two reasons for the failure of *Market Garden*. The first of these was that "the weather prevented the build-up of our airborne forces in the battle area", and the other, quite correctly, was that "the enemy managed to effect a surprisingly rapid concentration of forces to oppose us". And there it is; that is the real reason why the operation failed. Montgomery and his senior staff did not take proper account of the enemy. There were many faults and failures during the operation, but it was this reason, far more than anything else, that

RIGHT: **The Airborne Monument in Oosterbeek today. The memorial was funded by the people of Oosterbeek and is, perhaps unsurprisingly, referred to locally as "The Needle".** (COURTESY OF MICHIEL VERBEEK) prevented complete success.

Horrocks was of a similar opinion. "Montgomery, for the first and last time in his long and brilliant career as a tactical commander," he wrote, "completely under-estimated the opposition which we were likely to encounter during our advance to Arnhem."

Even though the drop and landing zones were so far away from Arnhem, if only a few second-class German soldiers had to be faced, the 1st Airborne Division could have swept them aside. Instead Urquhart's men were met by an SS Panzer Corps. In fact, von Rundstedt managed to bring 85,000 men into the battle zone in less than a week, considerably beyond anything imagined or prepared for by Montgomery.

As for the man who repeatedly warned about the enemy, Major General Sosabowski. Well, he was relieved of his command on the insistence of Browning who declared that the Polish commander was "raising objections and causing difficulties". If only Browning had listened to what Sosabowski was saying, the disaster, magnificent or not, may well have been avoided.

**FAR LEFT:** **In the background is the Polish Memorial located in the main square in Driel. The memorial column in the foreground was unveiled in 2006 by veterans of the British 1st Airborne Division.** (HMP)

**CENTRE LEFT:** **This memorial in Nassaustraat in Arnhem tells the passer-by to "Remember September 1944". Erected by local residents, it was unveiled by General Urquhart in 1987. This was the year that he made his last visit to Zwarteweg (where, at No.14, he had been forced to hide out), which is a short distance from this spot.** (HMP)

## MAGNIFICENT DEFEAT OR BRILLIANT SUCCESS?

We will end this assessment where Martin Middlebrook began his, by asking the question, "was it worth it?" According to Montgomery, *Market Garden* "was ninety per cent successful. We were left in possession of crossings over four major water obstacles including the Maas and the Waal". Indeed, he told King George that he was "well pleased with the gross result of his airborne adventure".

Churchill declared it to be "a decided victory". The historian Christopher Hibbert wrote that it was "one of the great epic tragedies which ennoble the history of the British Army", and G.G. Norton called the defeat "magnificent".

Magnificent or not, the 1st Airborne Division was all but destroyed and total casualties incurred in the operation amounted to some 16,000 men, 261 aircraft and sixty tanks. The Germans also later meted out severe reprisals against the Dutch for helping the Allies and 95,000 civilians were forced to evacuate their homes. The town itself was then ransacked by the Germans. *Market Garden* failed in its final objective, and failed at a heavy price. So why did so many senior figures regard the operation as a success despite the loss of so many brave men?

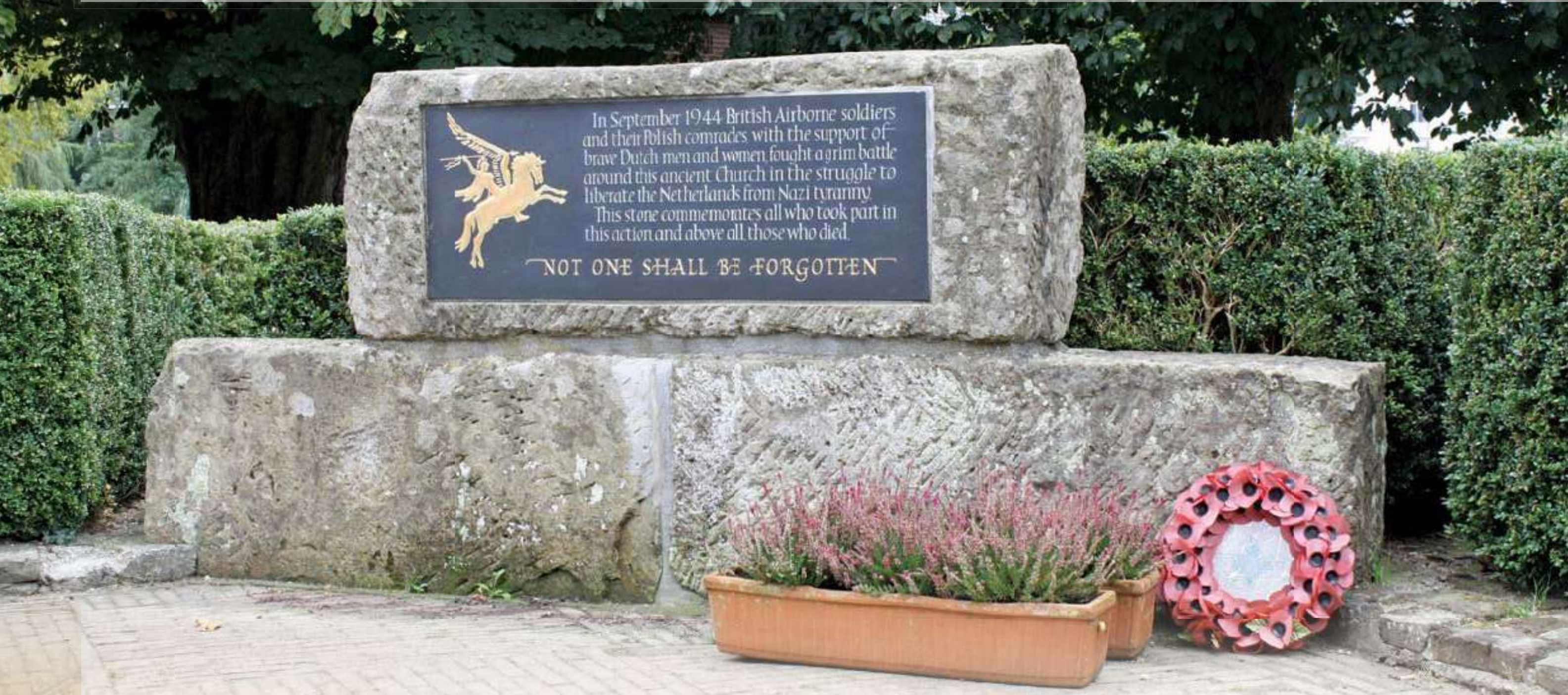
**ABOVE:** **One of the many monuments to the US troops involved in *Market Garden*. Taking the form of a US airborne soldier who has just landed, this one can be seen in the town of Son.** (COURTESY OF WAMMES WAGGEL)

The reasons for this are not hard to discern. Eisenhower, we know, had no real desire to push into Germany until Antwerp was open to Allied shipping. Despite giving the go-ahead to *Market Garden* he had not authorised any advance beyond Arnhem. We may recall that he said to Montgomery "let's get over the Rhine first before we discuss anything else". There would have been uproar in the United States if Eisenhower allowed the British to lead the way into Germany giving Montgomery the chance to claim the victory. After the war Montgomery complained that one of the principal reasons why *Market Garden* failed was that Eisenhower failed to give him all the resources he needed. This would have meant subordinating all American operations to support the British effort and this simply would never have been accepted by the other US commanders, Bradley and Patton.

The stark reality is that Montgomery was never going to get his rapid advance to the Ruhr and Berlin. In fact Eisenhower played the British Field Marshal very skilfully. By allowing Montgomery to mount the operation it then kept him quiet, especially as it failed to capture Arnhem Bridge. That was the end of Montgomery's bold plan and a thorn was removed from Eisenhower's side. The Supreme Allied Commander was therefore happy to sanction *Market Garden* providing it was no more than an operation to take the bridges over the canals and rivers which stood in the way of any future Allied advance.

By those terms, *Market Garden* achieved what Eisenhower wanted. General Brereton also was very upbeat about the operation. "Despite the failure of 2nd Army to get through to Arnhem and establish a permanent bridgehead over the Lower Rhine, Operation MARKET was a brilliant success," he concluded.

Was then the destruction of the 1st Airborne Division and the failure to secure the Arnhem bridge really the defeat it is generally perceived to be, or was it indeed a success? Firstly let us recall what Browning told Urquhart on 28 September: "We realise that had it not been for you, we would have had no chance whatever of securing the NIJMEGEN bridge intact ... you prevented any reinforcements from moving down towards NIJMEGEN. This just gave us time to secure these vital bridges."[7] That same day, Montgomery also wrote to Urquhart: "There is no shadow of a doubt that had you failed, operations elsewhere would have been greatly compromised. You did not fail, and all is well elsewhere."[8]


In September 1944 British Airborne soldiers
and their Polish comrades with the support of
brave Dutch men and women fought a grim battle
around this ancient Church in the struggle to
liberate the Netherlands from Nazi tyranny.
This stone commemorates all who took part in
this action and above all those who died.
NOT ONE SHALL BE FORGOTTEN

ABOVE: **Unveiled in 1990 by General Hackett and Mrs Ter Horst, the Airborne Memorial in the grounds of the Old (Lonsdale) Church in Oosterbeek "commemorates all those who took part in this action [*Market Garden*] and above all those who died". As the inscription on the memorial itself concludes, "Not one shall be forgotten".** (HMP)

BELOW LEFT and RIGHT: **Despite the losses suffered by all sides during *Market Garden*, including by the Dutch population, the sacrifice of the Airborne Forces has never been forgotten by the people of Arnhem and Oosterbeek. Here, in a tradition that continues to this day, school children remember those who fell and are buried in Arnhem Oosterbeek War Cemetery in September 1961.** (COURTESY OF THE DUTCH NATIONAL ARCHIVES)

The historian Tim Lynch has also brought to our attention the report of the American correspondent, Bernard J. McQuaid of the *Indianapolis Times*. "I had the honor of crossing the river Rhine and looking back on the historic Nijmegen bridge," he wrote on 10 October 1944. "Every GI in this outfit takes time to inform you that it was the first bridge across the Rhine that any allied troops secured. They are indignant at news accounts which fail to explain that the river at this point – which the Dutch call the Waal – is actually the lower and major confluence of the Rhine itself. To the men of the 82nd it is never the Waal, it is the Rhine, and they are the ones who got across it; let no historian forget this."[9]

When we also consider Browning's "bridge too far" statement, the implication is that the Arnhem Bridge might not have been entirely necessary, and that the operation could have concluded with the capture of the Nijmegen Bridge. The efforts made by the Germans to destroy the bridge at Nijmegen and Hitler's description of it being the gateway to the Fatherland give this view further credibility.

In his commentary on the campaign in Europe, Montgomery stated: "We had failed in our object of gaining quickly a bridgehead over the Lower Rhine at Arnhem, but the Nijmegen bridgehead over the Rhine itself gave us excellent strategic and tactical advantages."[10]

We know that Eisenhower was never going to rush into Germany until he could get supplies into Antwerp, so even if Arnhem had been taken that was as far as the Allies were going. All the evidence seems to indicate that Nijmegen was the most important objective. This might explain why no senior figures were too bothered about the reports of enemy armour at Arnhem, or why Browning did not drive the Guards on beyond Nijmegen with the kind of urgency one would have expected. It is also a fact that when Arnhem was eventually taken by the British in 1945, it was via the River Ijssel from the east, not over the Lower Rhine.

History needs to review its opinion of *Market Garden*. The First Airborne, Division, whilst not being able to hold the bridge at Arnhem, did enough to enable the 21st Army Group and the US Airborne to take the main prize, the bridge over the Rhine at Nijmegen.

With that bridge in Allied hands and the bridge at Remegen further south inside Germany taken by the Americans, the way was open for the great Allied offensive into Germany the following year on the broad front that Eisenhower wanted. So, was it worth the loss of so many heroic men at Arnhem and Oosterbeek when the real objective was the bridge at Nijmegen? The answer has to be "yes". Operation *Market Garden* was no failure. It was indeed, as Brereton had said, a brilliant success. ●

## NOTES

1. Harclerode, *op. cit.*, p.43
2. *Ibid*, pp.44-5.
3. Middlebrook, *op. cit.*, p.70.
4. Horrocks, *op. cit.*, p. 210.
5. Urquhart, quoted in Tim Lynch, *op. cit.*, p.163.
6. Arie-Jan Van Hees, *op. cit* p.257.
7. Tim Lynch, *op. cit.*, p.164
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*
10. Montgomery, *op. cit.*, p.150

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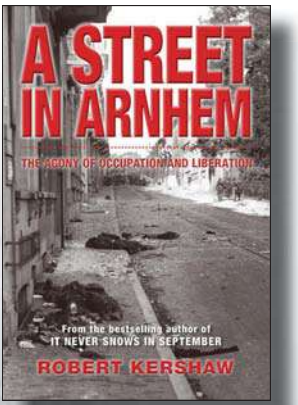
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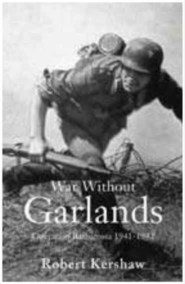
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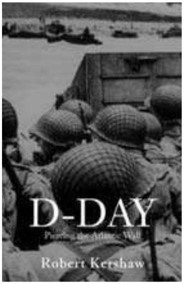
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